



HAUNTED BORLEY

by

A. C. HENNING

(*Rector of Borley cum Liston*)

foreword by

ELIZABETH GOUDGE

“*Anima est forma corporis*”

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BORLEY

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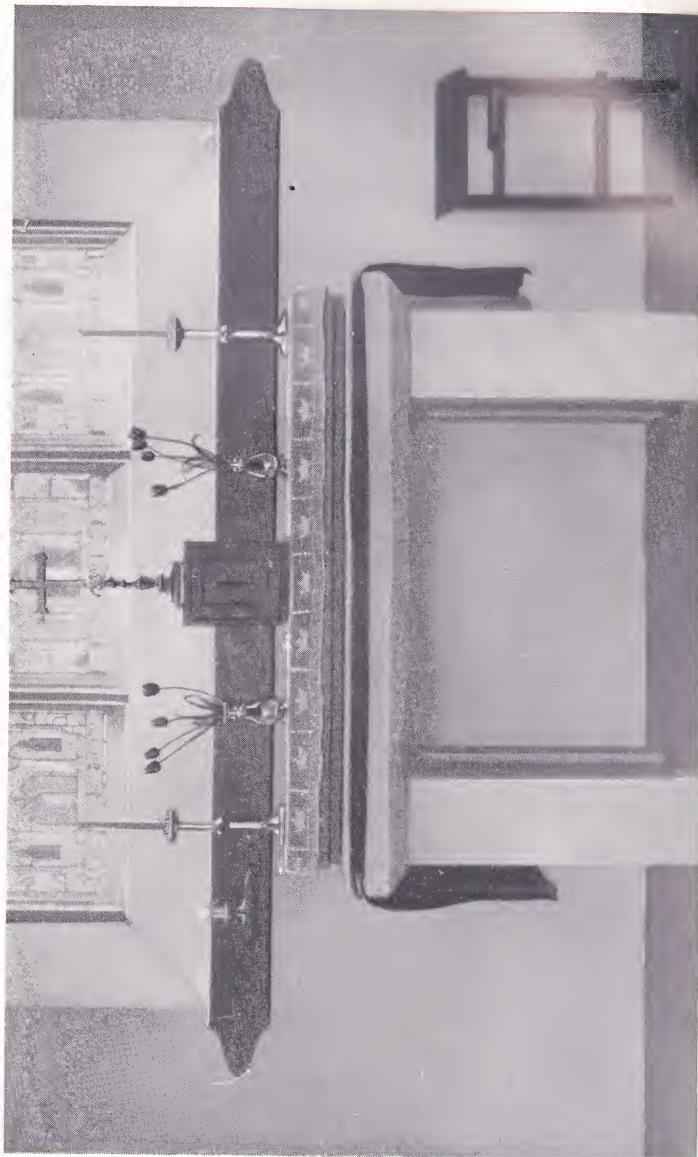
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[C. B. HENNING]

The Original Stone Mensa of Borley Church, restored June, 1947.

Photo by

FOREWORD

Much has been written about the strange happenings at Borley, but this book is about Borley itself, the stage of these happenings. It adjusts the balance and one feels at the end of it that what really matters is Borley, and not the strange things which may have momentarily disturbed, but cannot destroy, its peace and beauty. Mr. Henning loves his beautiful church, the villages of Borley and Liston and the quiet countryside about them very deeply, and is able to communicate to the reader both his love and his sense of the great value of village life to England. He has made patient research into the history of the church and of the Waldegrave family whose monument is enshrined there. He records some of the unexplained antics of the poltergeist and tell us of the strange experiences that have come to him and to others. But these do not seem important. What shines out is the church itself among the tall trees, with the avenue of yew trees leading to the brick porch, and the door that admits you to "the security of home, where all the cares of the world outside drop from you."

ELIZABETH GOUDGE.

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In view of the publicity recently given to Borley, the author has thought it wiser to change some of the names in this book.

CHAPTER ONE

I hear of Borley for the first time.

1.

I suppose most assistant priests look forward to the time when they have a parish of their own and that my longing to be away from Neton was nothing out of the ordinary. I had now, for this was 1936, been hoping for a country parish not only in that it would be a change, but also because I fancied that in the country, in the work of a parish far removed from London, one would get deeper communication with God. The matter was as much a personal affair as an economic one. For my wife and I with our young boy felt living in the country would be both cheaper for us and much better for Richard.

As for the parish of Neton which, in my mind, I had already left, there is little to be said of it since this book is about Borley. Neton must have been, at one time, a picturesque small village, but now between the wars it had become another built-up area with a great deal of paganism. Not that paganism is, of itself, an out-of-the-way matter. Neton was no more and no less pagan than anywhere else in England. And, indeed, pagan is perhaps hardly the right word in that paganism implies belief, belief at any rate in something, whereas most of the inhabitants did not appear to have any belief in anything, certainly not in God in the old accepted sense of prayer and church-going. If they had, alas, they never manifested it.

Out of the large parish of some 4,000, about twenty came to church and I cannot say it was an encouraging sphere of work....And in the midst of this sprawling 'wen' of houses, I and my wife and small son were living in a tiny flat, looking forward daily to what, in our inmost hearts, we knew must happen. But neither of us had the least idea that when the country parish arrived for us to take, it would be, of all places, Borley.

"Borley" I said, when I laid down the letter. "That's in Essex, isn't it?"

"Yes" my wife replied. She was at the moment giving Richard his breakfast and didn't appear to take much notice of my remark. Some little time after, when Richard was making the necessary gurgling noises so satisfying to a mother, she spoke again. "Borley? Yes, that's in Essex and a nasty cold part of England as well."

"Have you ever been there?" I asked.

"No" and, then, as she came round to her chair to start her own breakfast, she sat up suddenly. "Borley, did you say? Why isn't there something . . . ? Don't say you've been offered Borley, my dear?"

I passed the letter across the table to her without a word. I could hear the clock ticking on the mantelpiece ; I could hear Richard enjoying his breakfast with all the lack of restraint children are allowed and which seems to enable them to enjoy their food so much more

than adults ; she laid the letter down again and said emphatically “ Not Borley, my dear. We don’t want to start off in a place with a reputation like that.”

2.

At the time, I had heard nothing of the strange reputation of Borley Rectory. I knew nothing of Essex except that, next to the Fens, it was about the flattest county in England. But I did know that Borley was to be my parish. There would be difficulties about getting there I had no doubt, and the first was not long in coming. It occurred on the day I arrived by car to take my first view of the parish, my first sight of the lovely rolling countryside of Essex where it borders on Suffolk. The hills are undulating, round with soft contours and not to be compared with those of Kent and Sussex. But hills they undoubtedly are, and Borley itself stands on one of them looking down to the valley of the Stour to the little one track railway line running (in this part) from the ancient village of Long Melford to the town of Sudbury and so on to Colchester.

The long hill which falls down from Borley church, for the church is the crowning glory of the hill, drops into the valley and up again to a similar line of hills. As I stood there that first afternoon, my eye caught the tower of another church in the valley. Not the imposing, cathedral-like church of Long Melford (though I could see that very well), nor the glory of the church at Lavenham, but the little country church of Liston.

“ Borley and down there Liston,” I said to myself as I crossed the road in front of the church and went in to inspect the rectory I had been offered. I must spend no more time dreaming of the possible loveliness of the landscape when it should not be raining, nor imagining the walks I should have with my son when he was a little older and, let it be said, the weather was better. I was here on a mission. I was here to report on the rectory to my wife who, at this stage, would be far more interested in such things as the size of the house, its suitability for children and the ease with which it might be run.

Let me say at once that as soon as I went through the gate and into the shadow of that over-powering house I knew it would be no use, that we should need an army of servants inside to say nothing of gardeners outside, and that our little son, would be lost (literally) in its appalling immensity.

For large it was. Built in 1863 by the Rev. Henry D. Bull, it enveloped me as I went from room to room ; it cowed me into a feeling of despair as I came face to face with the monstrous mantelpiece in the dining and drawing rooms, and the height of the walls, the prison-like atmosphere of the back courtyard, the rotting barns and dark under-growth where scrub had already begun to invade the garden, caused my heart to sink lower and lower until I came, almost, to agree with my wife and to hear her words ringing in my ears. “ Not Borley, my dear, not Borley.”

CHAPTER TWO

I come to Borley

1.

Without a doubt the memory of that vast and ugly rectory damped my enthusiasm and cast a shadow over the journey back to London. And yet the impression that I was leaving a place both beautiful and serene was still with me when I arrived home.

I believe, now, when I look back at that time, I had fallen in love with the village and the little I had seen of Suffolk and Essex. I had all the town-dweller’s hankering for the country, for the space of fields about me, the long views unobscured by houses and factories which, deep down, mean England to most people. If only it had not been for that rectory.

When I walked along the street in Neton on my way home to give my report, I half turned my head as if I were looking at myself, a small figure beside the church and the huge elms, standing alone on the little piece of grass before the churchyard that afternoon suddenly amazingly happy at my surroundings. A villager, I supposed, had come up the long hill between the little avenue of limes, had hardly given me a glance as he passed, and I had turned into the rectory drive and into the overwhelming shadow which was still with me. And yet, as I opened the door of the flat I never, for one moment, doubted I should stand beside that church again or that I should, one day, know that villager who had passed me as Joe or Matt or Herbert or whatever his christian name was.

I have found that once things are right in one’s mind and there seems no possibility of a decision being wrong, events take a course in every way adapted to the end in view. Perhaps the effect of a person’s mind being utterly made up affects other people’s minds, a sort of subtle thought-transference. However that may be, our path was smoothed very quickly and the crux of the matter, the rectory, ceased shortly to be the nightmare it was on my first visit.

An evening of discussion, a sleepless night of worry in the dark considering alone all the pros and cons which I had already gone over many times with my wife, all culminating in a nightmare in which I was running down a long, dark passage, with doors on either side of me, with a can of hot water in my hands which it was vital I should not upset. In the morning, I wrote to the Bishop and explained the matter to him, asking his permission to reside elsewhere for the time being. The days which passed were almost like those in which one waits to hear the result of an examination. Then it came, the Bishop’s reply, sympathetic and understanding, with permission to live somewhere else, provided I resided in the parish. He also advised us to sell the empty rectory but he thought that this might, in view of its gloomy reputation and lack of conveniences, be a difficult matter.

I agreed with him and, now that we had been released from its spectre, nothing remained but to find a lodging somewhere in the village.

Perhaps, here, I should add a note upon the Bishop's advice to sell the rectory. This does not mean, of course, that the rectory is the personal property of the rector, or vicarage that of the vicar, though he is responsible for it and for many of the expenses of its upkeep, income tax and running. In the case of Borley, the man would have to have a very large income far in advance of the stipend and a family of at least ten to do full justice to its thirty rooms. But, with the Bishop's permission, he can sell the property and the proceeds of the sale are invested, the interest being added to the living. Those fields, called glebe land, which often go with country rectories are, for the most part nowadays, rented out to farmers for small sums and are the personal affair of the incumbent.

Thus the major problem was solved. The next difficulty was, owing to the kindness of Mrs. Basil Payne of Borley Place, really no difficulty at all. The population of the village live in small cottages and it was our good fortune to be offered rooms in Borley Place next to the church, if we could furnish them. It seemed, then, as if our plans were being smoothed out with remarkable speed and the feeling of rightness I had had at the beginning increased. When affairs go right like this, they often come with a rush and the final piece of good luck was the news that there was the prospect of a better house at Liston, that little village I had seen from the hill at Borley on my first visit, when the rector there retired.

Nothing more was needed. I accepted the offer of Borley with its reputation ; its remoteness, its notoriety and its beauty lay before us.

2.

I want, here, to say a word about this reputation. I shall have more to say of my experience both in the church and in the rectory in a further chapter. Now I want, if I can, to give my first impressions of what I heard from Lady Whitehouse who gave us her hospitality while we were moving from London.

And, perhaps, the first thing I should say is that we were coming from a city, with all that implies, to a village in the depths of the country renowned for its antiquity and which wears, even to-day, an aspect one can only connect with a hundred years ago. And in this lies its charm, in this aspect of sturdy agelessness. Nothing, like London, had newness about it. These sturdy oaks were saplings in the Conqueror's time, these fields had, no doubt, been forests or, since anyone could remember, had grown crops similar to those grown to-day. There had been more horses on the land and no noise of tractors, it is true, but the ponds in the village, the old barns and the church itself had been there since immemorial time.

I was coming, then, to a permanency of splendid things from a turmoil of noise and hurry to an agelessness of quiet ; from a world

ruled by time into an existence where time stood still or was divided into huge quarters—winter, spring, summer, autumn. I was coming from artificiality into tangible reality where my very thoughts and actions were nothing but a continuance of centuries of actions and thoughts, where everything, instead of being separate, made up of town units, became integrated, whole and purposeful. I was coming from an existence of stone paving and metal roads into one where mud, water, rain, snow and above all, the sun and the wind were things of more importance than the time of a train or bus.

And, as if my entrance to this new world should be as dramatic as possible, I was greeted by a ghost. Had I thought of all the other aspects of this new life, considered the age of the world to which I was returning, I might have expected to have met that ghost. But in the excitement I had not and when we sat, my wife and I, listening to Lady Whitehouse telling us of her experiences of the haunting of Borley Rectory, I did no more than thank God we had not to live in the house.

I could, I suppose, if I were of a dramatic turn of mind make much of my first reactions to the rectory. I could say that the feelings I had had when I entered it at the beginning of this narrative were due to its being haunted ; that I felt the atmosphere of the place about me like a dark cloak ; that I knew, at once, an evil spirit came here and that all I wished to do was to run from the place. But it would not be true. For one thing, I had not, then, any idea the place was haunted or, if I had, I paid so little attention to it that I had forgotten it. No, I had no feelings of fear in the house. On the contrary, my feelings had been, that first day, feelings of peace and quiet coupled, it is true, with dismay at the size of the place. I had not wished to rush from the house, I had felt no 'presences,' I had had no suspicion of anything wrong. And, in the garden, where Lady Whitehouse told us, the ghost of a nun had been often seen, I had had nothing but a sense of peace and perhaps annoyance that so much had been allowed to go untouched.

It was, therefore, with some trepidation that I heard Lady Whitehouse relating her actual experiences in the house with the Foysters, who had held the living previously. For the first time I was hearing of such matters from one who had witnessed them and not at second or third hand. I began to wonder about the future.

Even at this date investigations had been going on for seven years and the case of Borley Rectory was not new. To me, however, as to many people since, what I was now hearing was new and exciting.

And I suppose I met the account of these things in such the same way as other people. I began by being incredulous, even with respect to my hostess, and I ended by accepting the occurrences and trying to find an explanation for them. Now, of course, no one doubts that some things occurred at the rectory, that the name of 'The Most Haunted House in England' was fully justified, but no one, so far as I know, has hit upon a completely satisfying explanation. I need not,

here, reiterate those happenings, the nun who walked and was seen both in the garden and by the gate into the drive, the poltergeist manifestations and silly tricks which had so harassed the previous rector and his wife, the wall writings and the lights, to say nothing of the spectral coach and horses. All these have been properly recorded and investigated by Mr. Harry Price and can be studied and pondered on in his books.

The impression, then, I came away with from Lady Whitehouse was one of suspended judgement. I did not know what to make of it and the discussions with my wife got no further than to wondering if things were to happen to us. I came to the conclusion, eventually, that Borley had some peculiarities in its very ground and, to the knowledge that if one is going to live in the place, the story of the rectory cannot be ignored. In the years which followed my arrival, much has been added to the story Lady Whitehouse told us, much that is genuine and unexplainable, much that is just silly, childish and which can be explained, perhaps, by youthful high spirits. But my conclusions in those first weeks as I gradually got to know the full story and to find my feet in the parish, was that 'there are more things in heaven and earth' than I had previously suspected.

3.

True as it is that to live in Borley is to be constantly aware of the main story attached to the village, my intentions in writing this book are not chiefly connected with the hauntings. I came to realise, very early, that there were few records of the parish, that the Register dated only as far back as 1656, that nobody seemed to know when anything happened or troubled to keep records of what was, even at this time, happening.

For example, no one could tell me to whom the church was dedicated and now, with the help of my wife in searching records, I am still no nearer finding out the dedication. It has, so it seems, always been the Parish Church at Borley and so it will remain.

In trying to discover what had been on the site of this present rectory, I was told by a parishioner that her father could remember another, smaller house on the site which had been, I suppose, the Rectory of the Herringhans, whose tablets adorn the walls of the church, but no one could tell me what it was like, how big the house was or whether things had occurred in it in the same way as the Bull house. To take another example, the great and imposing Waldegrave tomb in the church. There is reason to think that there are Waldegraves buried beneath it and so rich a superstructure would surely require a vault beneath it. But no one knows for certain, no written record is available to point to a vault, and the opening to it, if there be one, has long since disappeared. Short of pulling down the tomb and excavating we shall never know. Without a doubt such problems

connected entirely with the church are of great interest apart from any abnormal happenings at the rectory.

This book, then, will be a record of the village of Borley and its parish church. In the following chapters, I have set down the results of ten years' work in the parish and all I can discover about its history. I could not have done this without my wife's help and enthusiasm for, in tracing details as far as they can go, she has been and still is tireless. Neither of us claims that the search we made is final or exhaustive, for time would scarcely allow us, who are not research students, to do more than give our little leisure to making it so. Time for visits to libraries and Record Offices has been snatched in the midst of parish and domestic work. All we claim is that, in so far as it is possible to us, we have attempted what before has not been attempted and have tried to rescue from oblivion, in a short treatise, the various shadowy people who have lived here, worked those fields, said their prayers in the church and then gone their way to the 'peace which passeth understanding.'

CHAPTER THREE

The Village

1. Waldegraves *

To dig into the past is a 'haunting' all of its own. I have often wondered in what lies the attraction of going backwards into the lives of people who have lived before us. A nostalgia for their way of life; a return to what, to us, seems a quieter time or a deep desire in each of us to feel and know we come in a direct line of familiar, daily connections with the past? We are, in all we do, so intimately imbued with a time-sense that to delve into history is, perhaps, no more than a searching for our very selves in others.

But you cannot undertake, even in so small a village as Borley, to go backwards into those lives without taking upon your shoulders the cloak of their now, present invisibility. To read of them is not enough, to walk where they have walked is to beget a familiarity with the very contours of their faces and to feel, in the dark yew avenue of the church, for example, the touch of their hands. And this applies to the humblest of those old parishioners who lie beneath their grass-green moulds around the church. How much more, then, does it apply to the dominant figure of the family who once held all Borley from the King, who now grace the church with their spacious effigies and who proclaim in their sculptured stone that 'as we are so shall you be.'

* For part of this section see *Downing Monuments IV* by A. I. Doyle, 1946.



Stephen Henning and view from north side of Borley Church
looking towards Long Melford.

Photo by]

[C. R. BAILEY, D.Sc.



A View of Borley Green. The large cottage is said to be haunted.

Photo by]

[C. R. BAILEY, D.Sc.

Amongst the figures of past rectors, past labourers, maidservants and all of low and high degree, the figure lying upon that tomb has been dominant with me. In my simplest moments he has been, in my imagination, beside me to point out, perhaps, that in his day a road went here, a house, now gone, stood there, but above all to exclaim upon the fact that the people of the village, though they may dress differently, are very much the same as in his day.

That figure is Sir Edward Waldegrave and to him, in 1546, Henry VIII granted the Hall with the Manor, Rectory and Advowson of Borley. An imposing figure to lie in little Borley church! But before relating his history, perhaps it would be as well if I gave a brief outline of the story of Borley up to his time.

Following on the Norman Conquest, Barlea was given to William the Conqueror's half-sister, the Countess of Aumale (later Albemarle), whose successors held the Manor till the time of Edward I. On April 8th, 1269, Aveline, the last descendant of that line, was married to Edward Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster, second son of Henry III. The King, we are told, considered her too great a match for a commoner in view of all her lands and castles. It is recorded that the King, the Queen and almost all of the nobility of England were at the wedding, possibly at Westminster Abbey where she and her husband lie in splendid tombs in the Chapel of Edward the Confessor. Her brother-in-law, Edward I, constantly urged her to resign her great possessions to the Crown, which she eventually did in exchange for payment. She died in 1293 without issue.

While Edward I was engaged in hammering the Scots, he issued from Peebles on the 14th August, 1301 a grant in exchange for the Manor of Borley for the Manor of West Cliffe (to the west of St. Margarets at Cliffe, near Dover) held by the Prior and Chapter of Christchurch, Canterbury. Then, Borley was worth £40 per annum and West Cliffe only £30, so the monks had to pay the King £10 yearly, a payment constantly in arrear judging from entries in the monastic registers.

At the suppression of the monasteries, the Dean and Chapter became the new landlords, but, in 1546, Henry VIII took possession of the Manor of Borley in exchange for the Almonry Buildings in the Precincts of Canterbury. Almost immediately he granted it to Edward Waldegrave of Sudbury with advowson. The right of presentation after the exchange of 1301 was claimed by the Prior and Chapter of Canterbury who presented Robert Assough on 4th October, 1313, but they were overruled by the King, Edward II, who presented Richard de Henley (or Henlee or Heal) the next day. The right was then never again challenged.

There seems to be inexplicable gaps in Borley's history. So far it has been impossible to trace any early manorial account rolls. The Chapter Library at Canterbury has a number of rolls for other manors with which it was associated, but for Borley there are none. When we turn to the Records of the Visitations held by the Archdeacon

of Middlesex (seventeenth-eighteenth centuries), it is noticed that the priest and churchwardens of neighbouring parishes attended, usually at Braintree or Halstead, but only on rare occasions was Borley represented and frequently not even summoned.

And so we come to our great figure. Sir Edward, son of John Waldegrave of Bures and Sudbury, was an outstanding figure of the past. He had been one of Queen Mary's Privy Councillors and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He represented Essex in Parliament and was given the Manor of Chewton Priory, Somerset, the seat of the present Earl Waldegrave, and the Manor of Navestock Essex, the seat of the eighteenth century earls.

Those were turbulent times, in one sense not unlike our own. A time of allegiance to old faiths, of changing to new ones, when a man might lose his head for a word spoken out of turn, but also a time when a man had more space to escape an enforcement officer who might be at his heels. But Sir Edward did not so escape. Before his final incarceration in the Tower, he had been there before in 1551 for refusing to inform the Princess that Mass must not be celebrated in her household. It is not altogether surprising that he ignored the Act of Uniformity passed at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign to enforce the use of the Book of Common Prayer.

But undoubtedly, it was a time of spies too. They must have been in his household, presumably Borley Hall. One of them would have posted away, perhaps at night, with the news that Sir Edward was holding Mass according to the Roman rites in his house, and that there had been present Lady Waldegrave and her children, Lady Petre, Lady Jarningham and others of the Roman Catholic party. A dark, determined figure of a man flying on horseback across the river making his escape from Borley and into the main road and so to the Court. Perhaps he was well paid for his information, perhaps she died from a fall as he was about his nefarious visits to others of his so-called friends. In any case his job was well done and his name and figure are forgotten. A servant like so many to-day, of intolerance, he has passed into the oblivion so well deserved. But before he went, officers had come for Sir Edward and, this time, there was to be no escape for him. He went to the Tower along with many of those who had attended Mass in his house, the priests officiating, Lady Waldegrave, members of the household, their physician Dr. Fryer, in all about a dozen. And there, in 1561 he died. This meeting may have been pre-arranged to try the lawfulness of saying Mass in private. If so, it was unwisely conceived, for though it was little more than a family meeting, it assumed, in the eyes of the Council, the appearance of a political gathering with consequences fatal to those who partook in it.

And so Sir Edward Waldegrave passes out of the story except for the strangest happening of his life. For he was first buried in the Tower and then brought back to Borley. What influence must have gone to setting that funeral cortege upon the road from London, with

the coffin in a cart, dragged by noble horses, perhaps his very own, caparisoned with a sombre cloth of fine jewels and finer geld. Passing along the roads which would be no more than lanes to us now, Sir Edward came back to Borley, pulled up the long hill from the river level and the entrance to his past home, to lie in Borley church. A staunch Roman Catholic had come home for good. It is all the more strange, therefore, that he should have been buried here at Borley where, one supposes, only the Burial Service of the Book of Common Prayer could be used. Moreover, there is no mention in the registers of any baptisms, marriages or burials of the Waldegraves.

Sir Edward's wife, Frances, who lies so sombrely beside him with a squirrel at her feet, survived him until 1599. She married, as her second husband, the third son of the Marquis of Winchester. This is the unnamed figure on the Waldegrave tomb. The family were strongly Roman Catholic and it is interesting to note that Sir Edward's great grandson, William Waldegrave, was knighted for his medical services to James II's Queen on the occasion of the birth of the Old Pretender in 1688. And we find that the family accompanied the King when he fled the country ; this is not surprising when we remember that Henry, Baron Waldegrave, was married to Henrietta Fitzjames, daughter of James II and Arabella Churchill whose brother was, later, created Duke of Marlborough.

It was not until the Hanoverian and Protestant King, George I, was on the throne that the leading member of the family, James, grandson of James II, was received into the Church of England. He became ambassador at Paris and Vienna, and, in 1729, was created Earl Waldegrave. For over 300 years the living of Borley was in the gift of the Waldegraves until it passed, eventually into the hands of the Rev. H. F. Bull.

Briefly that is the history of the most famous of the families connected with Borley. Of his children and the convolutions of their various marriages and deaths, there is no need to speak. Their little figures kneel in stone below the recumbent effigies of their parents. Black lettering testifies to their marriages. They are fast crumbling into dust, their features chipped and the very foundations of their kneeling stools breaking away beneath them. The canopy above their heads has lost its first resplendence of blue and gold, and time, which has bordered their lives these four hundred years, is quickly overshadowing their resting place and all we have of them in tangible record.

The children of the village (there are not many) now come with flowers at Christmas and Easter, and often there will be a little vase of snowdrops in late January or violets to perfume the air about their tomb. But they are not placed there because anyone remembers those old figures or wishes to honour them. The top of the tomb is flat and makes a convenient place for vases and glass jars. That is all.

2. Tunnels

No village in England is without its historical commonplaces. Various stories seem always to crop up in the same form or in very slight differences. What old house, what ancient castle has not its tales of escape tunnels from a beleaguered fortress. There is the famous tunnel, or report of a tunnel, at Hedingham, supposed to have gone from the Castle to Colchester some twenty miles away. Tales of escape, of sudden death, of dark deeds done in the past still remembered, of murders in gloomy houses and cold cellars of houses. Even past rectors of old parishes have not been immune from reports of murders done upon their villagers.

But perhaps the most insistent of all rumours is that of tunnels. Nor are we, in Borley, free from them. There is of course, the famous report of a tunnel from the site of the rectory (where it might be thought a monastery stood, with what truth I do not know) to a nunnery at Bures. There is no trace of it now and, maybe, it is no more than an offshoot of the times when tongues wagged at the doings of monks and nuns and when not all the inmates of such religious institutions were as zealous for God as might be supposed. At all events, there is no monastery at Borley now and no nunnery at Bures. Yet the report exists and I am often asked to show where the tunnel comes out. Such reports have fallen into what I call the romance of the village and seem to have no solid foundation in fact. If there had ever been such a tunnel, the builders must have been very fine engineers to have negotiated the hill and the river !

Next to the church, its windows looking out on the tower, is Borley Place and it was here, as I have said, we lived by the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Payne for the first nine months. The cellars of this house with some moulded joists and chamfered beams are interesting and probably of sixteenth century origin. It seems likely that these cellars once belonged to a much older house standing closer to the road. This is confirmed by a map published in 1777 by Chapman and André, showing Borley Place in this position. And, perhaps, to this older house is connected the old tunnel of which a village ancient, who had worked for Mr. Payne's grandfather, told me. He said that while repairing the wall to the front of the house (as it is now) he broke through into a large tunnel running east to west. He called attention to it and, with the aid of a candle, began to make an investigation. The idea was, eventually, to see where it led and if it held anything of interest. But, like so much in the history of Borley, it came to nothing. The old man, pushing on a little, met foul air. The candle guttered and went out and his eyes began to smart and water. It was impossible to go on and he returned, the entrance was sealed up and the investigation (if so it could be called ?) came to an end.

Speculation began. This tunnel, so tantalizingly discovered and almost broken into, may be that supposed to run from the church, under the road, to the old rectory. Wherever it runs there still remains

the question of its use. Possibly built as part of a drainage system which would have emptied into the Stour at the foot of the hill, there is a suggestion that, after being disused for centuries, such tunnels were converted into hiding places in Jacobite times. It is even possible that so close to the great wool producing areas of the Middle Ages, e.g. Lavenham, Long Melford and Kersey, it might have served smugglers well in the days when poundage on exported wool was heavy.

At one time, during the initial investigations at the rectory, it was thought a tunnel led off from the deep well which used to be in the courtyard. The well is still there though the house has gone, but I am assured by Mr. Turner, the present owner of the site who has had men down the well to repair it, that they can find no evidence of any opening and that what first appeared to be a tunnel some sixty feet down is no more than the sides of the well pushing out at that level. There is little doubt in my mind that no tunnelling was done at that depth and that those which were built were made with immense labour and not on the spur of the moment, which would probably have been the case had they been constructed solely as means of escape and hiding.

That is not to say that one day the one authentic tunnel in the village may not be opened up with a possible chance of discovery of things long hidden. Now, the great elms in the churchyard hang over it and over the tithe barn beside the entrance to it, and hens scour for food in the little courtyard in front of it. There is a pronounced atmosphere of peace.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Village. 2.

We had put all our furniture, except what we needed to furnish rooms with Mrs. Payne, in the rectory opposite. The move we had so long awaited had been effected and, as time began to pass, it seemed as if we had always been here. And on the horizon was the rectory house at Liston, a home of our own in the future. We had leisure, then, to view our new surroundings, to see just what we had come to and to make new friends.

You enter Borley village, if you leave the main road between Long Melford and Sudbury at Rodbridge Corner, after you have crossed the River Stour by the little bridge and the crossing gates which guard, in this place, the one line railway. A winding lane brings you to another set of gates (which are rarely shut) over the same track and you can walk over and view the mill and Borley Hall.

Borley Hall is mentioned in 1358 in the Calendar of Close Rolls. This house is probably the oldest in Borley. *Monuments of North-West Essex*, the work of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, considers part of the present hall was probably built in the seventeenth century on a modified L-shaped plan, with wings

extending south and west. Modern additions have been made at the south end. It was here or somewhere near that the house granted to Edward Waldegrave stood ; the house in which the spy, in April, 1561, had seen ‘ various Popish books and superstitious ornaments ’ ; the house wherein the famous Mass was said which as they say ‘ came to the ears of the Council ’ and over which Sir Edward was confined in the Tower.

Beside it, to-day, stands the mill. I have been told in the village that once the course of the river between the road and the Hall lay slightly further east. Owing to damage caused by flooding, it was decided to rebuild the mill nearer the Hall and to divert the river. Acutally and artistically, the mill itself is a disappointment for its height is too great for its length, and it does not impose upon its surroundings in a romantic way, which is the quality of most water mills. Alongside it, however, runs the little ‘ twitten ’ leading to the path over the meadows to Sudbury, which is our short cut to the town and of immense value in summer. As all this part of the village lies so low, the fields are flooded in winter and, indeed in 1947, water rose until it submerged the railway line, in this part raised some six feet or more above the field level. In summer, there is no lovelier walk than to come down the long hill from the church and to cross the fields with the winding river on your left and so to Sudbury. The return walk is dominated by the hill where the church stands, its tower white in the sun, or fading into the haze, or again dull grey in rain. In winter, with the leaves off the limes and elms about it, the tower is a distinct landmark but, in summer, with its canopy of foliage, it is not so easily seen.

In the village itself are no more than 120 people and here, at the bottom of the hill, are a few cottages and the disused school, its asphalt playground deserted now that the few children go to Sudbury or Bulmer. When you pass it to go up the hill you have entered the main village, a pronounced agricultural community, scattered for the most part and cut off desperately from anything like modern conveniences. The Tithe map of Borley 1839 gives the field opposite the school the name of Dovehouse Field. Possibly here had stood the dovecotes of the ancient manorhouse. And a fair sight they must have been.

The approach to the church and the rest of the village from the school is beautiful indeed and once one has arrived at the top, the view is reward enough for the long walk. Out over the Stour valley is an enchanting panorama of Suffolk. You stand here just in Essex and the first bastion of low Suffolk hills lie before you, decorated in the centre by Lavenham church just visible on a fine day and the church at Long Melford. I, myself, do not find the railway an eyesore, for that tiny puff of smoke as the locomotive finds its way along the valley serves but to remind me of the remoteness of the village. On fine days, it is almost as if one could reach out and pick up the whole train, as if it were no more than a toy, like the train my children play

with at home in the nursery. The fields roll down to the river and then up again to the distant hills. The sweep is wide and spacious and to be on Borley Hill amongst the trees is like ascending a tower with a secret look-out on the top ; you observe without being observed.

I have mentioned Borley Place beside the church and I will do no more, here, than say the church itself is the focal point of the hill. I shall devote a later chapter to a full description of the building and its history. But opposite the tower and south-east of Borley Place, against the churchyard, is a timber-framed and plastered barn. It was built in the fifteenth century and has been partially rebuilt. There are large old doors in the middle of the west front ; it consists of five bays. In 1937, on Coronation Day, the villagers gathered here to celebrate at a feast provided largely by the Squire of Borley. The barn to the south of the house is similar, but probably dates from the seventeenth century and is the only example I know of where corrugated iron has been used for a roof and is pleasant to look at. This must be, I think, because the iron sheets were put on at the original pitch of the roof and because they have been painted black. At all events it is not, at first, seen to be a roof of corrugated iron and is exceedingly picturesque.

And here, since we have come to it in our walk about the village, I must refer to the rectory again. The years since I first crossed the road and went in at the drive gates have made great changes here. For one thing the house, which had so appalled me, has been cleared away. The fire there in 1939 began the damage and, year by year, gales have added to it. Eventually, what was left of it was sold as rubble to build aerodromes. The present owner Mr. Turner, however, is interested in planting trees and restoring the garden. The stables of the rectory have been converted and enlarged into a good cottage. The meadows at the rear beyond the boundary wall are ploughed up and have become orchard. Perhaps in several years, the rectory grounds Mr. Turner bought will be turned into an asset to the village. Already it begins to look straighter and cleaner, and flower beds are taking the place of old brick heaps.

In my first days here, the rectory had been almost as much of a landmark as the church. Its gradual decay and eventual disappearance has left an open site with superb views towards Sudbury. On a winter’s afternoon with the sun shining, the town with its three churches has a mediaeval appearance. In the foreground of the picture is a building, a silo I believe, which has the look of an old castle. The sun casts a haze over the slate roofs and bonfires are burning in the fields where the men are cutting the hedges and clearing the ditches. Horses are pulling ploughs across the fields nearer the river and, presently, they will come up the hill for water in Mr. Payne’s pond and will go home to a well-earned rest. There is the hum of a tractor as we leave the church and go along the lane to Borley Green where most of our little community live. The rooks in the church elms bid us a screaming farewell and settle again. The lane is clustered

with hens and several fine cockerels. One in particular, a monarch of the farmyard, flies up on to the chestnut paling round the churchyard and crows loudly. You notice his loud remarks because he is the only living thing, except his wives, in sight.

On the way to Borley Green there is a turning on the right signposted to Brook Hall. Court Rolls of 1584 in the Public Record Office give it the name of Borlee Parva, but the Tithe map of 1839 and other records show it in the parish of Foxearth and an old parishioner mentioned to me that a field near Purkis Farm, lying to the west of this, used to be known as Little Borley. There is an interesting divergence here. The map of 1777, already referred to, shows a fairly wide road going from the river bridge straight up the hill to Brook Hall Lane, about parallel with the present road. The direction of this old road is indicated by the signpost there saying 'Footpath to Borley Church.' It has interest, perhaps, in view of the phantom coach reputed to have been seen in connection with the hauntings of the rectory. I have often remarked that if there were any truth in the story, there must have been a road where only fields are now to be seen. It is true that the road, as shown on the map, does not curve off towards the church but possibly, at an earlier date, a lane led from it to the church and so across the present road and in at the gates of the rectory. For the phantom coach, you may remember, is reported not only to be seen coming across the fields but to disappear inside the farmyard beyond the rectory cottage.

Borley Green is a picturesque spot. You pass one or two cottages on the way as you walk along the ridge with the views still with you. There are little ponds of stagnant water hidden behind evergreen hedges and banks by the roadside full of wild flowers. As you take the winding road, the church is sometimes behind you and sometimes at the side of you until you come to the Green and it is lost to sight.

Should you take the right-hand turn at the corner, you may see, if it is evening, turkeys by Purkis Farm roosting in the trees and a chicken will scamper out of a hedge and nearly trip you over. But I doubt if you will meet anybody unless it be a prisoner of war going home after work or a cat looking for mice in the ditch. The result of your walk will, however, be the same as if you had kept to the principal road—you will end up at the cottages which form Borley Green and the village pump, which is the only supply of water here. Behind the pump is the Post Office and the little beer shop with a fine vine growing over its walls. Facing them and the few cottages actually on the road is one large house, Borley Lodge, situated on land marked in the Tithe map of 1839 as Malting Yard and Malting Field, while the farm house itself stood further to the west and was called Green Farm. Across the road to the west, the same map shows Jenkins and Tibbs Farm—long since disappeared. The boundary of the parish is now not far off, for Easton or Eyston Hall stands in the parish of Belchamp Walter and the turning into its drive may well be the end of our walk and the place where we turn back.

You will see from the foregoing how small the parish is, how agricultural and how poor. For there is not, even in this year 1948, any water laid on to the houses. Only the village pump to which everyone comes. Some of the inhabitants live quite a way from Borley Green, but the interiors of their cottages are far from being as picturesque as the exteriors ; there are no baths or water, they are obliged to fetch and carry every drop of water for washing and cooking. This is a bad state of affairs, which I have done everything in my power to try to rectify. Many of our country parishes are as neglected as Borley. We have made several efforts to improve things by writing to our M.P. and the local Council. At intervals, a youth, a Sanitary Inspector, comes round to look at the water supply, as he calls it. But he has no need to visit each house in turn and so waste everybody's time talking to him—all he has to do is to go up to the Green and take a look at the pump, covered in winter with a coat of straw against frost. And well he may look at it, for this great iron affair must have been old when Queen Victoria came to the throne. Now with constant use it is loosening on its concrete bed. It is, I believe, much admired for its quaintness by visitors to the village, but I think their admiration would turn to wrath if they were compelled to rely upon it. However, there is one consolation, the water this ancient creakingly gives, when the massive handle is pressed up and down, is excellent and apparently without end.

The villagers, who are a friendly and neighbourly community, take it in good part with the usual grumbling at a Government which can spend money, millions of it, on useless ventures abroad, but do nothing at home. Deep down in their souls, perhaps, they have a feeling that they or their descendants will be here (drawing pump water) long after this or any other Government has passed away. For they have in their looks, in their very steps in the lanes, an air of wisdom and permanency no Government or Government official could ever have. The earth is theirs and even the water which comes out of the earth though they do have to carry it in buckets and jugs and waste valuable time fetching it.

We are back now at the church and I can look down into the valley to my home, to the other half of my parish, Liston. A few minutes down the hill and I shall be home. Mrs. Pearson will have locked the church for the night, the hens will have gone to their resting place and the lights of Sudbury begin to twinkle up the other side of the valley. Perhaps the red Post Office van will shoot past me on my way down the hill or that villager of ten years ago, whom I now know as Herbert, will pass me going home and give me goodnight. There will be nothing else but the hum of traffic along the main road in the distance and a late goods train roaring over the crossing. Swans fly up from the river and go away in the direction of Foxearth and a brown and white pony nuzzles my hand in a friendly goodnight. Everything is very still and peaceful.

CHAPTER FIVE

We move again

We had come to Borley in March 1936. An Order in Council was made joining the two parishes of Borley and Liston. Just before Christmas we took our furniture from the rectory and moved into our new house, Liston rectory about one and half miles away.

We were not only moving into a smaller house but into a smaller parish for Liston has only 70 people. But what a contrast from the rectory I had first viewed! The house at Liston had had several improvements made to it before we moved in, including the installation of electric light and central heating. The house lies at river level and Borley can be seen quite easily from the bedroom windows, while a high hedge shelters us from the lane at the end of which is the church with the red brick tower.

I do not propose to go into a history of Liston as I wish to deal solely with Borley. Curiously enough, Liston had an association with the Crown. The Manor of Overhall Liston was held from the time of Henry III by the service of providing the flour, of making and baking therefrom wafers and of serving these wafers to the King of England as he sat at table at the Coronation Banquet. There is little more to be said of it as a parish for it follows in its cottages, its people and its fields much the same pattern as Borley. But now we were established in its rectory, we felt as if, we had a parish of our own.

CHAPTER SIX

The Church

1. Architecture

The first thing which strikes a visitor to the church, after he has taken in the general picture of the tower and the tall trees about it is, I think, the little avenue of curious shaped yews leading to the main door. I can find no record of their age, when they were planted or who put them in. But Borley is so devoid of records that it is not surprising there is nothing about the yews. They may be old, but not so old, I fancy, as to have been of use to the bow and arrow makers of olden days. They seem, almost, a peculiar anachronism in the middle of so rural a village and if they had not been in the churchyard, might perhaps have been looked upon as an affectation, for they have affinity in their shapes and positions with Hampton Court. They remind you of mediaeval dress and the least one expects to see is a person still wearing bands.

The difficulty with them is to get them cut. I have had to employ German prisoners on the work, for the men of the village

work so late in summer that they have no time for grass and tree-cutting. Between the yews are planted roses and the graveyard is full of curious stones with odd country names which the weather is effacing. In this, at least, Borley could be repeated in a thousand churches up and down the country.

I shall endeavour now to say something of the architecture of the church, but being no authority on the subject, I have to rely mainly on a small pamphlet written by Mr. J. M. Bull (1936). This is now out of print. Dr. Eeles, an acknowledged authority, has carefully gone over the church on two occasions and confirms what Mr. Bull has said.

It is stated in Doomsday Book that there was a Manor at Borley before 1066 and so it is likely there was a church, probably wooden. There is some evidence that the district was much more wooded for, in this book compiled in 1086, Borlea is recorded as Barlea, which is the Anglo-Saxon for Boar's clearing or pasture. 'With the exception of the brick porch, the church is built chiefly of flint rubble, easily obtained from gravel pits in the neighbourhood in the days when transport was difficult and expensive.'

The church was built in the twelfth century; the chancel and chancel arch date from the fifteenth century or the beginning of the next. 'The history of the development of the church seems to be as follows. A church was built in the twelfth century consisting of chancel and nave. In the course of time the chancel and north wall of the nave fell into ruins and were rebuilt about 1500 when the tower and the brick porch with a niche for the Statue were added.'

I have often wondered what statue stood there until it was probably destroyed in Puritan times. Possibly to the patron saint but, as I have said already, we do not know who that is for Borley is one of the twenty-five out of the four hundred Essex churches whose dedication is unknown.

'Many towers and porches were added to Essex churches about this time when the use of brick became more general. The original windows were small so a demand arose in the 14th and 15th centuries for larger windows, partly to give more light and partly to give more scope for the stained glass maker. So the early windows were destroyed and the earliest window now remaining is the middle one in the north wall of the nave, which dates from the fourteenth century. The window in the south wall also dates from this century.'

It is a pity that all the mediaeval glass has vanished. 'A blocked-up doorway can be seen in the north wall of the nave and the doorway of the south wall has an oak frame, unusual in this part of the country, of the seventeenth century.'

2. Plate, Registers, Incumbents and Wills.

Although Liston church has silver plate dating from the early seventeenth century, there is nothing so old at Borley. The chalice is dated 1803 and has the following inscription on the foot :—

Borley, Essex.
The Gift of a friend through
the Rev. W. Herringham for the
Service of Holy Communion.

The two patens and flagon are of uncertain date.

Liston Registers date from 1599, but the Borley Registers are later. Records of baptisms exist from 1652, burials from 1656 and marriages from 1709.

Shortly after the death of the Rev. Thomas Murell (rector 1680-1708), the first register was copied up in one handwriting from 1652-1709. From 1661 to 1680, the Rev. William Playne was rector of Borley and, from 1662, of Langenhoe as well ; similarly, Murell, rector in 1680, was appointed to Langenhoe in 1681. As the children of both these rectors were baptized and, in some cases, buried in their infancy, at Borley and, as both these clerics were also buried here, it seems almost certain that the rectors resided in this parish and not at Langenhoe.

In 1699, Robert Goodwin succeeded his father, Philip, as rector of Liston and, in 1709 on the death of Murell, was appointed to Borley. The registers of both parishes between 1709 and 1719 are in the same handwriting. It is interesting to note that Goodwin regarded himself primarily as rector of Liston. He records ‘an affidavit for ye widow Dean made before Mr. Goodwin, Rector of Lyston April 27th 1719.’ This can be explained by the fact that as a child he lived at Liston rectory, and his children were baptized and interred at Liston.

Some of the old wills I have examined (*East Anglian Notes and Queries, Vol. VII*) throw a little light on Borley church as it was centuries ago. The will of Kateryn Rokell (1508) of Bourley mentions the statue of Our Lady in the church and asks that her body may be buried before it. We cannot say in what part of the church this stood, but as she leaves money for the repair of the steeple and the High Altar, it seems likely that there was a side altar in honour of Our Lady. This altar was probably where the organ now stands. The modern statue of the Madonna and Child now stands just to the right of the west door. It is interesting to note there was once a steeple on the church, though we know no details of it. Nicholas Talbot was mentioned as the parish priest at that time, and Borley was then in the Diocese of London.

An extract from Robert Fyrmyn’s will dated 1548 reads as follows :—‘I bequeath and commend my soul to Almighty God,

Our Lady St. Mary and all the holy company of Heaven, and my body to be buried in the parish churchyard of Borley.’ He also leaves money for the High Altar of Borley church. It is a pity that these wills provide no clue to the dedication of the church.

Nicholas Waldegrave, Sir Edward’s younger son, who inherited the Borley estate, directed in his will (1615) ‘that he be decently buried in the parish church and refers to Robert Warren, ‘Parson of Borley’ as my very loving friend.’ This record shows a remarkable harmony between the Roman Catholic and the priest of the Church of England.

Robert Warren seems to have been a priest of considerable standing. He was an M.A. and Professor of Sacred Theology ; he held the livings of Long Melford and Borley. From 1607 to 1618 he had been Rector of Langenhoe. He was appointed by Archbishop Laud to serve on a commission in 1631 called at Braintree to enquire into cases of indiscipline among the clergy. These cases included such things as refusing to make the sign of the Cross in baptism and administering the sacrament to communicants who were seated. Being a Royalist, he was dispossessed of both livings in 1643. We know from the *Ecclesiastical History of Essex* by Harold Smith D.D. (1937) that ‘In 1650, John Deeks, clerk, doth serve the cure of the church there (i.e. in the towne of Borley) by order from the Parliament upon a sequestration and hath for his paines the profits of the said parsonage and tithes (yearly value 45-50 pounds).’ At the Restoration, Warren recovered both his livings, but resigned the same year at the age of ninety-six.

In 1662, at the Visitation of the Archdeacon at Braintree, William Playne had evidently not yet come into residence, as Borley was represented by Tho. Kemps, Rector of Foxearth. Playne attended as Rector in 1663 and, in 1678, he reported that the parsonage, barns and chancel were in good repair.

3. Bells and Tombs

We have three bells. The oldest bell is dated 1574. The following inscription can be clearly seen on it :—

BURY SAINT EDMOND
STEPHANUS TONNE
me fecit 1574.

This seems to be the explanation of the statement in Doyle’s book on the Downing Muniments that the Church was dedicated to St. Edmund. If one looks carefully, it is seen that the bell was cast at Bury and that the name of the saint has nothing to do with it. Thus the dedication is still a mystery.

The next bell was cast by Cornelius Brewer in 1723 and re-cast by Alfred Bowell at Ipswich in 1925. The third was also cast by Bowell in 1925.

These bells can easily be rung by one person after a little practice by holding a rope in each hand and placing a foot in the loop of the middle rope. From the belfry, the roof is reached by a wooden ladder, at the top of which a heavy lead covering has to be lifted and pushed to one side. When finally at the top, one usually feels the climbing has been worth while. A lovely view, stretching away into Suffolk, is very fine on a clear day.

Many visitors to Borley church seem chiefly interested in the Waldegrave tomb. And this is not surprising in view of its commanding position in the nave. It is a very fine piece of work but, unfortunately, it makes my stall, where I sing evensong, very dark at times. Lighting in the church is a great problem as we have only very inadequate oil lamps. In one sense, therefore, fine as the tomb is (it is sixteenth century work), it is almost too big for the little church and is liable to distract attention. It is to be noted that one of the cherubs holding up the shields on the top of the tomb has been left unfinished and that the whole is in need of new paint.

4. The Mensa

I now come to a very interesting discovery. I was told by some villagers that the large stone below the chancel step covered the entrance to the Waldegrave vault. In 1943, Mr. Harry Price came to Borley again to make some investigations in the cellars of the ruined rectory, which culminated in the finding of the skull and part of the jaw bone of a woman. These were subsequently buried at Liston, as readers of this book will remember.

I thought this would be a good opportunity to have the stone raised. A mason from Sudbury partially raised the stone. On the morning of 17th August, Mr. Price and I went up to Borley. On going into the church, Mr. Price was much disappointed to find there was nothing but sand below the stone. He then went across to the rectory and I stayed a few minutes talking to the mason, who suggested that the stone might be the original altar of Borley church. I was much surprised as I knew very little about stone altars. As I gave orders for the stone to be replaced, I made up my mind that I would have expert opinion on the matter. Several priests came to examine the stone, but they all agreed it would have to be raised again and a thorough examination made before a decision could be reached.

So the stone was lifted once more and placed on bricks, the cavity being restored to floor level with Portland stone flags. I wrote to Dr. F. C. Elles, O.B.V., F.S.A., asking him to examine the stone. This he very kindly did and confirmed it as being the original mensa. It was also examined by the Rev. Montagu Benton, M.A., F.S.A., Vicar of Fingringhoe, Secretary of the Essex Archaeological Society, who agreed that this was the original altar. Some people had suggested that it might be an altar tomb, but Mr. Benton pointed out that, in

that case, there would have been some signs of an inscription and the chamfering would have been different. We had made several attempts to find the five consecration crosses, but we concluded these had been worn out by the number of people walking over the stone through the centuries. Later, on re-examination, Mr. Benton and I felt sure we had found one of the crosses. But, in any case, failure to find five crosses does not rule out the possibility of the stone being an altar. In cases where the Bishop lived at a great distance, a stone slab was sometimes sent to him to be blessed and this, being returned to the church and placed on the mensa, would be regarded as a true consecration. Mr. Benton also told me he judges these stones by measurements and general indications as compared with other stone altars.

Several Roman Catholic priests examined the altar and were puzzled because there was no cavity for relics. I am told, however, that relics were sometimes placed in a casket beneath the altar. The most usual arrangement was to place them in a receptacle in the substructure beneath the mensa.

Being now well assured that we had, indeed, found the original stone altar of Borley church, I determined to restore it to its rightful position at the east end. This necessitated obtaining a faculty from the Chancellor of the Diocese. For the uninitiated, I should explain that a faculty is a legal document giving permission for structural alterations to be made. It is sometimes extremely difficult to obtain this permission, but our way was smoothed by the kind help of Dr. Elles and Mr. Benton, whose recommendations eventually produced the necessary document. Among other things, this document gave us authority to remove the boards of the sanctuary and to replace them with stone flags. We had to wait a very long time for the materials. However, the mason promised to start work on Thursday in Whitsun week, 1947. I decided to begin excavating on Whit Monday, May 26th. I wished to do this for two reasons ; I wanted to find out for myself what was below the sanctuary boards and also prepare the place for the mason. I did not want the church closed for longer than was necessary.

I arrived at Borley church in good time on Monday morning. My helpers were Mrs. Henning, Mr. J. Durrant and Mr. J. Turner. The sun was shining as we went into the church and began to remove the altar cloth, the cross and the candles. After a while, although we had been working hard carrying the heavy altar table into the vestry, it began to get cold for the sun did no more than penetrate the stained glass and fall into the nave where we had no work to do. We began, therefore, all the more eagerly pulling up the floor boards and it was not long before our search was rewarded. Beneath them and directly in the centre of the altar, we found a black marble slab, an obvious tomb. When the floor boards were removed, they revealed, in perfect preservation, the tomb slab of Humphrey Burrough, who was Rector of Borley from 1722-1757. He married Philadelphia, daughter of Nathaniel Bisby, Rector of Melford until he was ejected in 1689



Borley Church. The point on the path where the organ was heard is marked X.

Photo by]

[C. R. BAILEY, D.Sc.



Borley Mill, the original building stood further east, nearer the river.

Photo by]

[C. R. BAILEY, D.Sc.

for being a Non-Juror. Of Humphrey Burrough, the present Headmaster of the Grammar School, Sudbury, writes: 'He was Headmaster of the Grammar School in 1714. At that time and until 1817, the headmastership was combined with the curacy of St. Gregory's. Some of the incumbents employed others for the teaching but Burrough did the work himself, his most famous pupil being his own nephew—Thomas Gainsborough. An elder brother of Thomas was named Humphrey after his uncle. He became a Dissenting Minister at Henley-on-Thames and the church he served is celebrating the centenary of his Ministry next month.'

In St. Gregory's church, Sudbury, Humphrey Burrough is listed as Rector in 1714. Perhaps this explains the unusual number of people who were married by him at Borley church and who apparently had no connection with the parish.

I had much hoped that we should find the supporting pillars of the original altar. But as the work of excavating progressed, we were disappointed in this and concluded that when the mensa was removed, probably in the reign of Edward VI, the pillars were broken up. As we dug into the soft sandy soil beneath the sanctuary, we were constantly finding ancient and yellowed bones. There is, of course, no explanation for these, since there was no way of finding out to whom they belonged. These were carefully gathered into a basket as they came to light and I buried them later in the churchyard.

It was during the afternoon that, in moving the crowbar about in the loose earth, Mr. Turner suddenly broke through into a cavity which proved to be a brick-lined vault, presumably that of Humphrey Burrough. The strange thing about this vault was that the brickwork looked new and there was no foul air from it. Below, as we lowered a torch on the end of a pole, could be seen some three feet of water. In the water were clearly visible three skeletons. The hole was closed again and now, of course, the new floor covers the place, leaving the black tomb slab.

It was unfortunate that our investigations could not be carried out undisturbed. People seemed to have chosen that particular day to visit Borley church. Literally hundreds must have passed in and out. And it was extremely difficult to keep a clear space for our work. In the evening after tea at Rectory Cottage opposite, we were all very tired for not only had we to do the work but it was necessary to keep, all day, the crowds of people in check and explain a little what we were doing. But as dusk came, we lifted the old wooden altar from Borley church and took it down in Mr. Turner's car to the church at Liston.

On May 25th, the masons started work. The sanctuary step was removed and brought forward about a foot to give more space and the ground carefully levelled for the stone work. On Monday, June 2nd, the altar was lifted from the floor of the chancel and lowered on to the four Portland stone pillars, no mean feat as the mensa weighed just on fifteen hundredweights. I was sorry not to have been there

at that moment, but I went up the next day and looked with great pleasure at the restored altar. Some other improvements had been made on the advice of Mr. Benton. The front choir stalls and communion rails were removed. All this gave a satisfying sense of space.

Owing to all the work going on in the church, we were unable to hold our annual Corpus Christi Festival. This Festival, held in honour of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, is a great event in Borley. People seldom come to church on a weekday, but we endeavour to make this festival a family gathering of the two parishes.

I decided to hold the re-dedication of the altar on June 15th and to make this Sunday our Festival. The church was full at 3 o'clock. I had invited some neighbouring parish priests to assist me, and a special service or re-dedication was prepared and printed for the congregation. I felt that this was an occasion for a little colour and ceremony. I had been lent a very beautiful cope and, with two servers carrying lighted candles, we proceeded up the church for Evensong. After the service, I said the special prayer for re-dedication compiled from ancient sources. I will quote it here, for it was during the saying of it that I made the sign of the Cross and re-dedicated the mensa.

'Regard we beseech Thee, O Lord, the supplications of thy people. Bless and sanctify this altar erected for the Célébration of Thy Holy Mysteries, in the name of the Blessed Trinity and in honour of Blessed Mary Ever Virgin, and grant that they who shall here offer the Spotless Oblation of the Body and Blood of Thy Son may find and feel that with such sacrifices Thou art well pleased.'

Amen.'

I offered the first Eucharist on the restored altar on the following Sunday, June 22nd. It was a strange sensation to stand there. My thoughts inevitably went back to all those priests who had stood before this altar saying the Mass for the people of Borley in the Latin tongue. To me, it was full of significance for whatever may have happened in the years of change, the altar was again in use.

Its massive structure stands for that permanence of the Faith which Our Lord promised to his Church, 'Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

CHAPTER SEVEN

Haunted Borley

1. The Rectory

Many will have heard of Mr. Price's two books, *The Most Haunted House in England* and *The End of Borley Rectory*, and this chapter is by no means an attempt to add anything to what is so full an account of investigations carried on over a long period of years.

I have said that one cannot live in Borley for any length of time without being aware that the rectory and its story is of paramount interest. For one thing, scarcely a day passes but a stranger will stop you and ask questions. Nobody minds people interested in the subject of paranormal happenings coming to see the site of the rectory, providing they are well-behaved. But when they do damage to the fruit trees, leave litter about the churchyard and spend whole nights shouting and brawling amongst the graves, they become far from welcome. Mr. Turner tells me he even arrived home one night to find two men in the garden with guns, though what they imagined their bullets could effect upon a ghost, they did not explain.

All these years, then, I have been in Borley, the story of the rectory, if not the rectory itself, has been part of my life and I can but set down the experiences I and my friends have had there. It made no difference when, in May 1937, I had a letter from Mr. Price asking me if it were possible for him to rent the rectory for the purpose of making investigations. In fact my associations became closer, for after we had come to an arrangement, Mr. Price advertised for observers willing to stay in the house for a time and make careful records of anything unusual. As Rector, I met several of these people and spent many hours keeping watch with them often until late into the night and without anything of a paranormal nature occurring at first. One very interested observer, who stayed there for long periods, was Mr. Kerr-Pearse. We got to know him well and sometimes he would take time off from his labours and spend the evening with us at Liston. I have a vivid recollection of one particular evening in July 1937. Mrs. Henning and I returned with him to Borley.

As we went in, I carefully put the chain up at the front door, and I want to make it quite clear that we took every precaution to prevent anyone playing tricks on us. All the doors and windows were locked and sealed. The only entrance was the french window of the small study where we sat talking at a table. In so far as it was humanly possible, we had made sure that there was no way in or out of the rectory except by that window.

There is little doubt, I fancy, that at such times when one is keyed up to a pitch, the slightest noise makes an impression. And the odd thing about the rectory, a fact I had noticed repeatedly since my first day inside it, was the abnormal quiet of the place. One had the idea that the vast block of masonry somehow protected you from the outside sounds and acted as proof against them. In a short time, the creaking of boards shrinking after dark in the cool of night no longer disturbed you but, on a night such as this, I believe anyone who had sat with us would have been more than usually aware of anything out of the ordinary.

It was getting dusk. Mr. Kerr-Pearse was, if I remember, telling us of a conversation he had had with one of the villagers that morning, when there was a noise of someone opening a door. We sat and waited in silence and I can remember myself thinking how

bright the light of the lamp was and that it needed turning down before it began to flare. I suppose subconsciously I was very glad to have that lamp there. If my eyes were fixed upon it, my ears and those of my companions were on the passage outside and the door which had opened. All of us had heard it. As for me, a curious pricking sensation came over me and when, afterwards, I told my wife of it, she said she had had the same sensation, coupled with a fear not of anything paranormal but of what she was going to see, and that something, she said, might be horrible. You must remember we three were alone in the study, in the house, with only a door between us and what had emerged from another door in the passage outside.

And then in the utter quiet of the night, we could hear footsteps coming up the long stone-flagged passage leading from the kitchen quarters and with the steps and, as it were, following after them, came a swishing noise as of long trailing garments. We rose slowly from our seats and still continued, in the frightening silence penetrated only by those footsteps, to wait. The whole house, the difference in our personalities, the very idea that we were impartial investigators who were supposed to be above being swept away by any emotion of any kind, were absorbed and concentrated into those footsteps where no footsteps should be, that opening door and swishing garments in a house we knew to be empty....They came down the long passage nearer and nearer to the study. Our bodies were tensed as if to ward off a blow and I had become, suddenly, thirsty.

When we could stand the tension no longer, we went to the door and opened it. I do not know who actually opened it or suggested going to the door. Nothing had been said but it was as if we were not three separate people, but one. All I remember was that I had a feeling of not being able to listen any longer to those steps and the next moment we, all three of us, were at the door. Without a word, we ran into the passage and looked about us to see—nothing. The moment the door opened, the sounds ceased and the two nightlights, which had been placed in the passage, were still burning brightly.

Whatever may be the explanation of the occurrence, it is certain we three all heard the same noises and had the same reactions to them. Later that night, we left Mr. Kerr-Pearse and went home, but I am still wondering, even now, who or what it was there in the passage of that empty house and, when it disappeared, in which direction it went?

I became very interested in Mr. Kerr-Pearse's experiences and often called at the rectory for a chat on my way to Borley Green. On one occasion, he took me into the sewing room and showed me a piece of rotten wood which had appeared there during the night. It was lying near the fireplace and, at first, I thought it might have fallen down the chimney. I looked up the flue and noticed there was a great deal of soot, whereas the wood had no trace of it, nor had any fallen into the fireplace. The appearance of this piece of wood is as strange as that of the dried-up frog which Mr. Kerr-Pearse found one morning near

the drawing-room. This frog also appeared during the night and I saw it the next morning when I called at the rectory. We discussed the matter for some time, but could find no satisfactory explanation. No doubt a frog could have gone into the house from the cellar or garden, but this specimen had been dead for some time. I suggested wind at the front door might have blown it along the passage, but we came to the conclusion this was not possible.

We were equally mystified by an old stocking which appeared on the window-sill in the passage leading to the kitchen. There is also the case of the mysterious coat.

Hanging on the door of the large bedroom at the south-west corner of the house—the room we should have used as our bedroom had we ever lived at the rectory, Mrs. Henning found an old tattered jacket. It was evidently a woman's jacket. We told the gardener, Herbert Mayes to burn it. When Mr. Price was going over the rectory in June 1937, he was surprised to find a dark blue jacket hanging in the blue room, the room adjoining the bedroom where we had discovered our jacket. He was very surprised as it was not there on his previous visit and he wrote to me about it. I thought Mayes had forgotten to burn the coat as we had directed, but he assured me he had done so. I then took him up and showed him this new coat. He said, however, it was quite different from the one he had burnt. There the mystery remains, only to be deepened by the subsequent disappearance of the coat altogether.

Herbert Mayes, mentioned above, lives at Borley Green. Whilst employed as our gardener, he used to cycle home each day. Mayes is an honest, hardworking labourer, not in the least given to imagining things and I am convinced that his various strange experiences are true. For instance, I had always regarded the story of the phantom coach as quite fantastic until the following experience made me reconsider the matter.

One evening in March 1939 as Mayes was cycling home, he heard the sound of horses trotting down the hill. Thinking that some of the horses from Mr. Payne's farm had broken loose, he pulled his cycle on to the grass at the side of the road and turned the lamp in the direction of the sounds. To his amazement, the sounds of trotting horses passed right by him and on down the hill, but there was nothing to be seen.

It is not at all easy to get Mayes to talk about this incident because most people just laugh at it. I have, however, questioned him closely about the matter on several occasions and I am sure he is speaking the truth. He has had other paranormal experiences. There is, for instance, the mysterious light which used to be seen in one of the rectory windows. Many people claim to have seen this light, but I shall only mention those whom I know personally to have had this experience.

There are still some villagers in Borley who can remember Mrs. Smith, wife of a former rector, showing them the light from the

road. She then took them into the rectory and up to the bedroom where there was no light burning. On going out into the road again, they could still see the light. Of course, the sceptic immediately suggests a reflection from another light, the moon or car lights. But the matter has been very carefully tested on many occasions and these explanations do not fit. A painter, who worked for us here, knew about the light and thought it might be explained by the presence of phosphorus in the wood of the room. He made a most careful examination of the room, but admitted it could not be explained in this way.

To return to Herbert Mayes. As he passed the rectory, he noticed a light showing in the windows on the stairs. There was no moonlight and he could not account for it. The light was also seen on the same night by Mr. and Mrs. Payne as they were returning from Borley Green. They noticed the light not in the stairs window but on the south side of the house. They concluded Mr. Price had some observers there that night and thought no more of it. I went up to see the Arbons at the Rectory Cottage next morning and made careful enquiries. There had been no observers and Mr. Arbon said he had not lent the key to anyone. I determined to go up to Borley that night with Mrs. Henning. We looked carefully all round the rectory, but there was no sign of a lighted window.

Herbert Mayes' experiences go back to the time when Mr. Foyster was Rector of Borley. When Mrs. Foyster was away, he used to look after the Rector. He told me that on one occasion he had just arrived at the back door when he heard a loud crash, as if a tray full of crockery had been dropped. He went all over the house, but there was nothing unusual to be seen. On another occasion, the same crash occurred just as he was going out of the back door. He ran back, but again there was nothing broken.

During August 1937, Miss Alice Reid, a friend of ours, came to stay. She was interested in the story of Borley, so we took her to see the rectory. She had a strange experience outside the blue room. Although it was a warm evening, she came over very cold, especially in her arms and hands. She asked us to feel them and it certainly was as she stated. This cold feeling went off a little when we moved away to another part of the house but, on our returning to the entrance of the blue room, it came on again.

Of all the phenomena recorded at the rectory, some of the most remarkable are those of the messages and marks appearing on the walls. A record of all these is given most fully in Mr. Price's first book, and I only touch on the matter because I myself saw the marks and messages. I remember being present one night with Mr. Price and some observers. I went round with the party and we noted most carefully all the marks which had been ringed. After waiting all together in the study for about half-an-hour, we made another tour of the house to find fresh marks had appeared. Mr. Price was insistent we should keep all together and close to him so that no one could go ahead and have a

few pencil marks ready for us. Of course, it is easy to say someone was hiding in the house and marking the walls while we were downstairs. As the house was carefully barred and sealed, we were all convinced that this could not be so.

I cannot recall any other outstanding phenomena in 1937, so I will come to the sale of the rectory in the autumn of 1938. We had long wished to dispose of it, for it was a costly business to be responsible for the repairs of two rectories. Many came to look at the house, but its reputation and size prevented a sale for a long time. At last Borley rectory was sold to Captain Gregson who, with his two sons, came into residence in December, 1938.

His time at Borley was not altogether happy for, after various strange events, including the loss of two dogs under curious circumstances, the rectory was partly demolished by fire in February 1939. I well remember that night for we were roused by telephone about midnight and, from our windows, we could see the rectory well alight. Captain Gregson did not stay very long after the fire and the rectory was sold to Mr. Woods. The house was gradually dismantled and the bricks and rubble sold.

On the whole, things seem to have been much quieter although this doesn't apply to the lower part of the garden, which belonged to Mr. Harrison.

However, Mr. Turner had a strange experience. One beautiful night in August 1947, he thought he would cross to the church for a stroll. He sat down on the step—but I will tell the story in his own words.

'August 2nd, Saturday. The night of the full moon and my brother, Philip, and his wife are staying with us. Went to Long Melford to meet John and Elizabeth and home again about 10.30. Elizabeth wished to spend the night in the church, but this was not possible because both doors were locked. At 12.15, I went across alone to the church where I sat, in the light of the full moon, for three quarters of an hour or more, for I heard the clock in Sudbury strike one o'clock. All the time, out in the road, a young man was saying goodnight to his sweetheart. I could hear their voices dimly along the moonlit paths and between the great yew trees. There was absolutely no wind at all and I sat huddled up upon the step of the priest's door with a jacket over my shoulders. I stood up and looked out across the fields and realised, as one does sometimes, that I was utterly happy. In a few moments, I slumped back into my former position for I was quite tired after the day's work, tired but not in the least sleepy. It was then that it happened.

Something was going up the main path of the churchyard, something which had one footstep more marked than the other, and something in a gown or skirt which swished as it went. Perhaps the whole affair lasted no more than ten seconds, but my attention was held for, it seemed, much longer. All the time, the man and the girl were talking by the gate, some two hundred feet away from me.

Whatever came up the path to the porch must have passed them if it came from the direction of the rectory. But they had not been disturbed. The actual happening, which occurred as I have stated while I was neither thinking of such things or perhaps of anything in particular, left little visible impression upon me.

I left the churchyard soon after as my brother came to call me for a cup of tea. Had I heard the steps coming up the little path to the priest's door, I should have been terrified. As it was, whatever manifested itself then seemed intent upon its own errand and to have nothing to do with me. I do not believe I would have gone back alone into the churchyard after that, however.'

Mr. Harrison has had some strange experiences. He built a stone shed for agricultural implements on what used to be the rectory vegetable garden. Outside the gate, he erected two stone walls and was waiting for some cement to finish the work. These walls had been standing for a fortnight without any movement of the stones. One day, while he was talking to someone in the road just opposite the gate, one of the walls fell right over without any apparent reason. At the same time, the two gates swung open. There was no wind to account for this.

Still more inexplicable is the story of the hazel twig used for water and metal divining. This had been used by a man who came over to divine for water. At a certain spot, the diviner stopped with the twig for some time and said he thought there might be treasure buried there. Mrs. Henning and I were very interested as we had, some years previously, had a diviner to search for the church treasure which, according to tradition, was buried in the rectory grounds. We asked a friend who is able to divine for various metals, to try the ground. She was convinced there was treasure of some kind as the hazel twig re-acted in such a peculiar manner. We spent a good deal of labour digging in the place indicated, but we found nothing. Neither did the three men from the B.B.C., who came down and dug to the depth of nine feet. A very large hole was dug underneath one of Mr. Harrison's walnut trees, but nothing was found. Soon after the hole was filled in, there came that terrible storm which took off the spire of Foxearth church. It also tore down the walnut tree, which fell exactly on the spot where the men had been digging.

But the real point of this story is the strange behaviour of the hazel twig. It was usually placed in a tree close to where we were digging so that it might be handy for divining. One morning, Mr. Harrison found the twig outside his house, which is situated some distance from his property. Thinking some boys might have found it and thrown it down outside his house, he picked it up and restored it to its place in the tree, walking up the road from his home to do so. The next morning, he was astonished to find it again in the road, only a yard from the spot where he had previously picked it up.

2. The Church

I have loved Borley ever since the day I first set foot in it. But the church, apart from my being an interested party, has always been to me a place of utter quiet and peace. If one needed a shelter from the appalling affairs of the world, what better place, I have often said, than Borley church. Many churches, though fine architecturally, seem lacking in atmosphere. To me, they seem empty. On the other hand, I have entered some lovely shrine where a great wave of prayer seems to enfold one in peace and beauty, but I have known it no more obvious and stimulating than here. For one thing, when you reach Borley church you have, as I have observed before, come up to it by means of an avenue (not very long) of lime trees, and walked down a small avenue of yews to the low brick porch. It is almost as if one had entered the security of a home and that, once through the porch and inside the lofty building, all the cares of the world outside must drop from you. Others, who have nothing to do either with religion or with the running of a parish, have mentioned this to me. That the church is beautiful both in itself and its setting there can be no doubt and for all the experiences I and others have had in it, I am still convinced of its serenity and beautiful atmosphere.

I have there always felt the church to be a sanctuary. Possibly on two or three occasions, I have gone down to the west door, thinking I heard visitors in the porch. Finding no one there, I thought it just imagination. It is only in more recent years that some remarkable phenomena have happened.

My first experience of anything unusual was in April 1942. Near the Tabernacle which rests just above the altar is a small sanctuary lamp. This was kept burning day and night to indicate that the Sacrament was reserved for cases of emergency, which do sometimes arise even in small country parishes. During the war, we found this light could be seen at night some distance down the hill. For this reason, it was put out at dusk and relighted in the morning by Mrs. Pearson, who lives close by. For almost a fortnight, the small wick of the lamp was removed during the night.

To stop this happening, a large psalter and other covers were put over the lamp at night and the church locked as usual. On three occasions, the covers were found scattered on the ground. I was mystified and mentioned the matter to Mr. Price. Shortly after this, a mouse was caught in the church and I concluded that it was after the oil and had knocked over the covers. As poor as a church-mouse is proverbial and certainly there is little in the way of food in Borley church, but I cannot think so small a creature could have upset the heavy psalter in this way, especially as the accident did not happen every night.

The next incident is connected with the Catechism class. There are very few children in the parish but most of them come to church for instruction. One Sunday, the children arrived as usual

and sat down near the organ to wait for their teacher. After about five minutes, they distinctly heard steps entering the porch and the key of the door turned in the lock. Kathleen Finch, an intelligent girl of about thirteen, immediately went to the door and, finding it locked, called out "We are here, Miss Byford." There was dead silence.

The children became increasingly frightened and alarmed even when Kathleen suggested that it was some sort of joke being played on them and that everything would be all right in a few minutes. And, fortunately, everything was, for I do not like to think of those children shut up in the church with the knowledge that they had no way out. Miss Byford arrived in a few minutes and was astonished to find the door locked. She entered and the class went off as usual.

The reader will, naturally, suspect a practical joke as, indeed, I did myself. I thought the door had been locked by one of the girls from the Rectory Cottage opposite. I questioned Kathleen Finch very closely about it. She told me that when she had mentioned the incident to the girls at the Cottage, they had strongly denied that they had touched the door. From my knowledge of the girls, I doubt very much if they would have bothered to come out of the Cottage, cross the road, walk up the yew path, lock the door and then walk off again, all for the fun of frightening a few children. In view of all that has happened in the porch since then, I think the locking of the door was a paranormal experience.

I wish, now, to speak of more recent developments. In the chapter on the church, I mentioned the restoration of the stone Mensa. This cost £85, a very large sum for so small a parish. We felt it necessary to make a wider appeal and gradually contributions began to arrive by post from various people, though an appeal in the columns of the Daily Telegraph did not, at first, seem to have much luck. Many of these people were strangers to Borley and quite unknown to me.

The sum slowly mounted and when Mr. Harry Price kindly promised to come from Sussex and give a lecture on Borley, I felt we were well on the way to raising the amount needed. I decided to hire the Town Hall, Sudbury for Wednesday evening, June 4th. Posters and tickets were printed with Mr. Price's name prominently displayed and, as I hoped and expected, all tickets were sold out a few days before the lecture.

The day of the lecture was oppressively hot but, as Mr. Price wanted to see the restored altar, we took him up to Borley at half past five in the evening. No one was about and we went up to the chancel, leaving the west door open. While we stood there talking about the altar, we were interrupted by an insistent and prolonged screeching of birds near the west end. I should almost describe it as a panic screaming of the rooks, which inhabit the elms overhanging the tower. I have often heard the birds make the usual noise when coming on and off their nests, but nothing approaching the din which was now going on behind us. Mr. Price asked "Do they always go on like that?" and I had to say that, as far as I knew, the noise was unusual. I think what I

really meant was that I had grown so used to the birds and the noise they made that generally I did not notice them. The very fact that I was now noticing them pointed to the noise being out of the ordinary.

But the noise died down and, in the stillness after the birds were at rest again, came the sound of footsteps in the porch. I thought to myself, "What a pity. Visitors are coming in just when we wanted to be undisturbed to talk." We waited for people to appear but no one came. I hurried down the church thinking someone had heard our voices and did not like to enter. I was astonished to find no one in the porch and, going quickly through the churchyard, I looked up and down the road. There was not a soul to be seen.

There are two points to be noted about this incident; firstly, we had all gone up to Borley with the altar in mind, and we were not expecting any unusual experience. Secondly, I would emphasize that only a few seconds elapsed between the sound of the footsteps and my arrival in the porch. Anyone playing a trick would not have had time to disappear before I caught them.

If this incident of the mystery footsteps stood alone, it would not perhaps be conclusive. Many others have heard them. I have already quoted Mr. Turner's experience which did not, it is true, happen in the porch but, you will recall, he heard steps going up the main path to the porch. A friend of mine, Mr. J. Durrant, heard them at least a year before I did. Early in 1946, he was visiting the church with his fiancee. When they reached the west door, they turned to sign the visitor's book. Footsteps were heard in the porch and the door handle was rattled. Thinking the person on the other side could not open the door, Mr. Durrant pulled it open and, to his astonishment, found no one there. He could not see anyone on the path or down the road. Convinced that someone had come to the door, he ran quickly round the outside of the church to see if anyone was in hiding. There was no one and the place was deserted.

I have digressed a little from the subject of the lecture to give these two rather striking instances of paranormal footsteps. When we arrived at Sudbury, we found the Market Place packed with cars and motor coaches. We made our way up the crowded staircase to the small stage where the sheet had been erected for the lantern slides. Unfortunately, many people had to be turned away.

I introduced Mr. Price to the audience and spoke of the finding of the altar. I said I wanted to raise nearly a hundred pounds and that Mr. Price was generously giving the lecture as a contribution towards it. As the lecture was mainly about incidents related in his books, I will not attempt to repeat them. The lecture was a great success and we raised £26 towards the altar fund.

On the following Saturday, the footsteps were again heard and at about the same time of day. I had taken up two young friends, one a medical and the other a science student of the University of London. While we were in the chancel, there was again the loud screaming of the birds and we heard the steps in the porch though, to

me, they were not nearly so distinct as before. We all hurried down to the porch. My two young friends ran quickly round the church but could find no one.

During the month of June, Mr. Alan Burgess and Mr. Peter Eton of the B.B.C. came to see me with a possible view of a broadcast on Borley. They said they had an open mind on the subject of the haunt and would be interested to hear my views on it. They seemed surprised to find that I believed the hauntings to be genuine and asked me to put them in touch with people who had first hand experiences. Mr. Burgess planned to bring a recording van to Borley and make records for a broadcast in the near future. It happened we were away on a short holiday while the van was at Borley. We arrived home on 21st June to find an urgent wire asking us to visit Broadcasting House on 24th June. This was quite a new experience to both of us and we were duly impressed with the vastness of the B.B.C. and the courtesy of its officials! Here we met Mr. Price again. It was somewhat of an ordeal reading over our parts in the script several times until we had satisfied the producer. The broadcast took place on Sunday, 29th June. Personally, I thought it was a success, though neither I nor my wife could recognise our voices.

On Monday, 28th July, accompanied by my son, Stephen, nine years old and home for the holidays, I went up to Borley church to attend to the flower vases. We put the water bottle in the middle of the seat on the west side of the porch. While we were near the organ, we heard a bang as if the bottle had been knocked over without being smashed. I had left the door open, so I told Stephen to see if the bottle had been moved, but not to go out into the porch. I watched him look through the door. He came back and said the bottle was still where I had placed it. A few minutes later on going into the porch, we found the bottle was moved to the end of the seat near the door.

On 22nd August, we were again at the church. Stephen put his cap in the middle of the same seat in the porch. We both took careful note of its position and went into the vestry to get things ready for Sunday. A few minutes later, on glancing through the door of the porch, I noticed that the cap had been moved about three feet along the seat. There was not sufficient wind to account for this. I should add that, on several other occasions, I have placed my hat on this seat but it has not been moved. Those acquainted with poltergeist activity will recall that such trifling incidents are characteristic.

A little later in the year, a friend of mine who lives in Sudbury had a remarkable experience. This lady, who desires to remain anonymous, has lived many years in the district but did not believe the stories she had heard of the rectory. She has now changed her mind. One afternoon, she came to look at the restored altar. As she passed through the door of the porch, she felt a presence and limping footsteps followed her to the chancel step. Not liking this, she turned back and the steps followed her as far as the door. As soon as she

passed the door, the steps ceased. As she was wearing rubber-soled shoes and was walking on the matting, she felt the footsteps could not be explained as an echo.

On 15th October, Mrs. Walrond (Norah Burke, the novelist) rang me up and asked if I would show her the altar. I suggested that she should come early in the afternoon to get the full advantage of the light. Just before 3 p.m., we motored up to Borley. We were about half-way down the path in the churchyard when she said "Someone is playing the organ." I, too, heard it. The music was quite loud as if someone was playing a voluntary before a service. We both stopped. I thought it must be one of our parishioners who used to practise on weekdays. Then I remembered she was ill and that our regular organist would be away from the village teaching at her school. Mrs. Walrond thought a service was in progress and that we should be unable to look at the altar, quite forgetting she was with the Rector who would have known if there was a service and would have, no doubt, been taking it himself.

I recalled, at once, the stories I had heard about the organ being played and how others had heard it at night when the church was known to be locked. I hurried on ahead but when I reached the porch, no sound could be heard. We entered the church together. All was still and the organ was locked. It would have been impossible for anyone to get away as we approached for the only two doors faced us as we came along the path. Moreover, the organ requires a blower.

Before examining the altar, I suggested an immediate return to the church path. We walked up and down several times listening for anything that might sound like an organ. We could only hear two tractors and a distant plane. None of these sounds remotely resembled the playing of an organ. After looking at the altar, Mrs. Walrond went over to the Turners at Priory Cottage. I again walked up and down the path but did not hear anything unusual. In talking the matter over afterwards, we both agreed that the thought of the organ playing had not occurred to either of us on the way to the church, but we had both wondered if we might hear footsteps.

At the end of the month, I received the following letter from Mr. E. W. Jephcott of Alcester, Warwickshire :—

' Dear Sir,

I have read with quite unusual interest the account in the *East Anglian Daily Times* for October 24th of the experience of Mrs. Walrond and yourself at Borley recently. It provided astonishing confirmation of what I believe to have happened on the afternoon of Tuesday, September 16th.

It was probably about 3.30 that day when I called with a friend to have a look at the site of the rectory. After doing this, we went across to the church and, as we were walking up the pathway, my friend said "The organ's playing." I could hear no music and we passed on into the church, where no one else was present and the organ closed. I thought little more

of the matter until I found in Mr. Harry Price's latest book on Borley the statement that villagers claim to have heard ghostly organ music and singing from Borley church when no one was within it. My friend assured me he had not read Harry Price's book and that his impression of organ music was sufficiently strong to make him wonder whether a funeral service was in progress and we had better not enter the church.

You will see from this how remarkably similar this was to Mrs. Waldron's experience. I should be much interested to know whether you yourself heard the music and whether any definite tune was apparent. If the playing should recur, it might be possible to take note of the melody and get it identified.

I went to Borley again on September 19th, but had no paranormal experience.'

I have never met Mr. Jephcott, but the experience of his friend is very interesting as tending to confirm what happened to Mrs. Waldron and myself. I regret I am not sufficiently musical to note down any melody in the unlikely event of recurrence.

The following incidents will, I think, be of interest because they refer to the mystery footsteps.

Two ladies had come to see Borley church. They had only heard vaguely of Borley, but wished to see the church in its lovely setting at the top of the hill. There was no one about in the road or the churchyard. It was a beautiful day with bright sunshine and they left the west door open.

While standing on the chancel step looking at the altar and the Waldegrave monuments, they distinctly heard steps come down the church path and into the porch.

Thinking someone had heard their voices and was coming to ask what they wanted, they hurried to the porch. No one was in sight either on the path or in the road. They were considerably astonished as the footsteps had sounded so clearly in the stillness.

They decided to go to Sudbury for lunch and return to the church later on.

In the afternoon as they stood on the chancel step they again heard footsteps though this time on the north side of the church. There was silence for a few minutes and then they heard the footsteps coming up the church path to the porch. They rushed to the porch but no one could be seen. There was just the bright sunshine, the absolute stillness, and the empty path and road.

They decided to try and find some parishoner and ask if there was any unusual story attached to the church. Walking towards the village they met Mrs. Francis and got into conversation with her.

From her they learnt quite a lot about Borley, for Mrs. Francis had known one of the former rectors very well. She said that he and her son had been great friends. The rector told him of a very remarkable

experience. He was coming away from the church one afternoon, and as he left the porch he heard footsteps behind him. Turning round he was astonished to see a nun walking slowly after him with head bent and folded hands. He was still more surprised when she followed him across the road and into the rectory drive. He paused for a moment at the front door for the nun had just reached the rectory gate and then went in and closed the door. He then looked out of the kitchen window but could not see any sign of the mysterious visitor. Finally, he went out of the gate and looked up and down the road with the same result.

Up to this point, my record has been of things moved and heard but not of anything seen. This, however, does not apply to Mr. Kiernander's experience. I first met him when I was digging at Borley in 1946. He called to see me in September 1947 and said he was visiting the church in the afternoon. I said, "I don't expect anything will happen." He agreed laughingly, but writing from his Worthing home on 21st September, he gave me the following story :—

' I would like to tell you of a curious thing that happened whilst I was sitting in the church at Borley. As I mentioned on Wednesday evening, my attention was to visit the church and district with my friend the following afternoon ; this I did by myself as she failed to put in an appearance.

I duly visited the church and thought what great improvements you had made to the altar, etc. As I was about to leave, it started to rain, so I thought I would sit in the porch and read a magazine which I remembered I had in my cycle bag. I must have been reading for half-an-hour (time about 5.15) when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a white figure or shape move across the porch entrance (I should say about 20 feet distant). Before my brain could tear itself away from the article I was reading, the object had passed the west pillar of the porch ; I at once bent forward thus broadening my field of vision to the westward. This ought to have brought whatever it was into my view again, but there was nothing to be seen.

I am quite sure I did not imagine this as I was not thinking of anything connected with Borley, but of what I was reading at the time. I am sorry I could not get my eyes focussed on to whatever it was before it vanished.'

On Sunday, 14th December, I was preparing for the 3.0 Evensong. On going up to the altar, I found the small kneeling mat had been moved from the south side of the altar to the centre of the sanctuary carpet. When I enquired about this of Mrs. Pearson, she said the mat was in the usual place when she lighted the sanctuary lamp in the morning. It is hard to believe anyone would have come into the church and moved the mat from its position.

I myself believe that the spiritual bodies of the departed do appear at times to people, but I should not care to claim this is so



Langenhoe Church where strange things have happened.



The sixteenth century Borley Hall, the original home
of the Waldegraves.

Photo by

[C. R. BAILEY, D.Sc.]

with regard to the Borley nun. Incidentally, I may remark here that there is much confused thinking over the natural and the spiritual body. St. Paul's clear teaching that we have two bodies, the natural and spiritual has either been forgotten or ignored. In so far as people have thought of Resurrection at all, they have thought of it almost wholly in terms of the natural body. I suppose it is conceivable that a spiritual body might be so earthy (I use St. Paul's own term) as to be earthbound for a long period.

I have been frequently asked to hold a Requiem Mass for the nun. I hold it a grievous omission to neglect prayers for the departed, but I do not feel I could hold a service for a being whose identity is so shadowy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Is Borley haunted?

The question, 'Is Borley haunted?' is a question argued, dismissed, accepted and laughed at according to one's personal feelings on the matter. 'I don't believe in ghosts,' as opposed to 'There may be something in it,' down to an outright, 'I have seen something and, therefore, know of the existence of paranormal happenings.'

I think the idea of practical jokes can, in the main, be excluded for I doubt if they would have extended over so many years or with such remarkable similarity. In the event of village youths manufacturing 'evidence' (a most unlikely thing in Borley for we have not that type of young man in the village), one would expect broken windows, much vulgar laughter and shouting and possibly attempts to 'manifest' a ghost by means of a sheet. The latter was, I believe, once tried by some undergraduates from Cambridge but, for the rest, there has been nothing approaching what one might have expected. If, therefore, the whole of the recorded phenomena were practical jokes, they must have been done by someone with refined taste but with a limited imagination for, on the whole, the phenomena keep very much in a groove. Besides, in all these years from 1929 onwards, no one has come forward as a 'joker' and I fancy it a poor reward for his ingenuity to remain anonymous for so long. Generally, such people reveal themselves if only to be praised for their cleverness!

Their very triviality seems, to my mind, to point to their being genuine. But, once having established this fact to your own satisfaction you come to the question with whom or what are they connected?

Take, for example, the footsteps in the church. Can we suppose on the evidence that they are in any way connected with the vision of the nun last seen some years ago? It is impossible to say, but I feel that the day Mr. Price and I dug in the cellars of the old rectory and discovered the remains of a female jawbone may have some connection with the nun. That was the day we first raised the

original altar and we had gone down into the dark cellars beneath the house to follow up a possible clue of the wall writings about a well. Mr. Price and I, with our gardener, Jackson, had first excavated the shallow well and then come round the supporting wall and dug out the narrow trough, with the result that we brought to light the portion of a skull and jawbone. These, as Mr. Price stated, were buried at Liston. And, with that burial, I like to think the old 'Nun' haunt of the rectory came to an end and that, at last, the blocked window in the drawing room could be used again. That is, if the house had been restored instead of being demolished. I have often wondered, from the day I saw that blocked window, who or what could have looked in at it.

With regard to the shallow well which we, that day, did no more than empty. A former owner, when he bought the site, made it his first task to clear up the tons of rubbish lying in the cellars now open to the light of day. And to do this meant he had to move all the piles of old iron, bits of disused lorries and other incredible dirt collected there by a former owner. If he wished to have a rose garden on the site, it was necessary to get the stuff buried so that it did not sink when tons of earth were put on the top of it. In doing this, he got down to the level of the cellar and back to the well. This he excavated and, finding the bottom was of bricks laid flat, he pulled it all down and began to dig underneath it. The well, only five feet deep, was on a solid clay bottom and there was nothing under it. The place is now closed in and the cellar has a brick path running across it.

And here, in connection with the hauntings, is, I think, an important point. When people have stood on top of that incredible pile of twisted steel, old tin cans and other rubbish in the cellar, they have often heard noises coming from it. Rats have been suggested, but I have never seen a rat at Borley and certainly none in the cellars. Mr. Peter Eton heard some of these noises and recorded the fact in the broadcast already alluded to. But when the owner was excavating the cellar with the help of a friend from Cambridge, with a view to finding the well before it was all closed in again, the moment they struck the edge of the wall, there was an escape of gas and much disagreeable odour which dispersed when the well was fully revealed full of mortar, bricks and fluid. This gas, percolating into the shifting and rotting rubbish may often, I think, have been the cause of a lot of the 'noises' heard in this part of the site since the house has been demolished.

But I do not think many of the other phenomena can be explained away. What, for example, are we to make of the entity Mr. Turner heard that summer night on the church path or the one Mrs. Henning, Mr. Kerr-Pearse and I encountered in the house? Has such an entity anything to do with us who are still alive? To me, this is a fascinating subject for speculation. Likewise, has it not its tender and tragic aspect, if it be considered that such a 'thing' is trying to get into contact with the living? A wistful wraith who yet inhabits this little

plot of garden or this green acre of graveyard, searching in vain for help which we, misunderstanding, cannot, if we would, extend to it. And there is, so far as I can see, no way in which we can be sure.

In this connection, I would say a word on seances often claimed as a means of finding out what a spirit requires of us. The answers given are often quite contradictory and may arise from the sub-conscious mind. I, myself, place no reliance on seances and, indeed, consider the whole thing wrong in principle.*

If we turn, now, to the events of the past which Mr. Price investigated, I can find nothing to disprove the various happenings. So many people with no axes to grind have testified to seeing marks on the walls and hearing voices in the passages. There can be no doubt that at that time the haunt was genuine, though the various stories attached to the nun and the coach may be little but conjecture.

I doubt very much whether the casual visitor to Borley is likely to go away satisfied. And those who, even now, spend the night here are so often from towns and so completely unaware of what the country is like at night. This is of great importance. I have had to learn the different values one may put upon a noise and to realise that a frog moving in long grass during a summer's night can make a noise very like someone walking, if you are near enough to it. Birds, too, have their peculiarities in sound and may often be responsible for casual visitors going away with the idea that they have heard voices; a cart rumbling over some hollow place beneath the apparent smooth surface of a road may have the effect, almost, of an army on the march. That is not to say that I do not believe incidents have happened to casual visitors, but that the general atmosphere can only be felt by a long sojourn in the place itself. But to come to Borley and to depart again with the notion that there is any harm here is quite wrong. There is nothing dangerous here, only peace and quiet and a peculiarity of age woven into the texture of the fields and the buildings, a peculiarity felt and witnessed by a host of reliable men and women, a peculiarity not to be dismissed by the wave of a hand and a scornful laugh.

* When Mr. Brown, who was kindly typing my manuscript, reached the point recording my disapproval of seances, the small hand lamp near him was suddenly swept from the table by some invisible force. He neither shook the table nor touched the lamp. He demonstrated to me exactly what had happened and told me he had been typing with the lamp in the same position for weeks past.

CHAPTER NINE

The Country Priest

Because I have been writing on serious subjects, it must not be supposed that the country priest's life is altogether without humour. For instance, there is often unconscious humour in the answers given to various questions, not least those concerned with church-going. The latter is a subject which must be touched on with a good deal of

tact. The following are the kinds of answers I sometimes receive if I should be so venturesome as to embark on that highly dangerous topic of church attendance :—

"I had company come."

"I can walk quite well, but the moment I set out for church, my legs give way under me."

Rheumatism apparently has a way of being very troublesome on Sundays. Occasionally, a conversation may go somewhat on the following lines :—

Rector : "I don't think I have seen you at church for a long time."

Mrs. B : "My rheumatism has been very troublesome."

Rector : "But I saw you walking to Sudbury the other day."

Mrs. B : "Yes, that's true, but you see it only troubles me on Sundays."

At the end of this chapter, there will be found a list of the Rectors of Borley. In many cases they are mere names.

The earliest known, Peter de Cachepore, is interesting because of the number of appointments he held and the variations of his surname given as Cachepore, Chacepore or Chaceporc. He was appointed Rector of Borley on 28th April, 1236 and, as the value of the living was under one hundred shillings, the Pope, then at Viterbo, Italy, gave him a dispensation to hold other benefices. In 1241, we find him holding Aldham, Ivinghoe, and Croydon ; in 1252, Stoke ; in 1253, Ramsey (Hunts). He was appointed Prebend of St. Paul's in 1242, Prebend of Chichester in 1244, Prebend of Exeter in 1245, Prebend of Banbury in 1253, Treasurer and Prebend of Lincoln 1254. He was Keeper of the Wardrobe, Archdeacon of Wells, Dean of Tettenhall (Staffs) and Constable of the Castle of St. Briavels and Forester of Dean. Shortly after 1260, he was sent as envoy to the King of Aragon.

This man certainly vies with Cardinal Wolsey as a pluralist and one wonders what time he could have spent in Borley. Possibly such things as this explain the outcry against pluralities at the time of the Reformation. Perhaps I should say Deformation, for although there were undoubtedly abuses such as the above, so many lovely things were swept away that we have lost rather than gained. To name only one great deprivation, the loss of the Family Eucharist as the central act of Christianity and its worship, though, in many parishes, this has been restored.

In these days, we do not suffer from pluralities in quite the same way, but from worse things. In former times, the church was the centre of the spiritual life of the village. The corporate life of the parish was greatly strengthened by the various guilds in the larger villages. These guilds frequently had their own altars in the church as was the case at Long Melford. At Lavenham, the guild of the Holy Trinity had a site apart from the church. There is now a tendency to group together two or even three or more parishes under one priest. This is usually unpopular, for a village likes to have its own priest living amongst them. In my own case, the Borley

people thought I should have lived there as it is the larger parish. Though I think it is true that the wish of each village to have its own Rector or Vicar is largely a matter of sentiment, yet there is a certain loss somewhat difficult to define. It seems likely, in the future, there will be a gradual increase in the grouping of parishes, owing to economic pressure. There may even be a return to something of a monastic character with several priests living in a clergy house and serving a number of parishes. This would raise the problem of the celibacy of the clergy. I do not, myself, believe in the enforced celibacy of the clergy ; it is surely a matter of vocation. On the whole, it is true to say that the wife of the priest has done invaluable work in many villages ; she can often deal with problems of wives and mothers more effectively than a man.

It is to be hoped some way may be found to preserve many of the villages as units with the priest living in the midst, even if clergy houses have to be set up in other districts. There is a tendency to discourage the continuance of small village communities ; the idea is, in the name of economy, to deny them the amenities of water, electric light and the like, thus forcing them to larger centres of population. It would be a dreadful thing to kill the village life of England.

Since the war, conditions have greatly changed for the country priest. In pre-war days, many of us employed gardeners. Present day wages make this impossible for most of us. I spend much of my time in cutting wood and digging ; this enforced return to something akin to monastic toil is very healthy and enjoyable. It is a good thing for the parishioners to see their parson in old clothes and Wellington boots as well as in a cassock and vestments. It also helps the priest to enter into and appreciate something of the countryman's daily toil.

The country priest and his parish have not been unaffected by the materialism of the present day. Though this materialism is not perhaps so marked as in the towns, it is, truly, a strenuous battle to keep alive the things of the spirit under present conditions. I have often wondered whether a return to the methods of the Preaching Friars of the Middle Ages might not bring more response to spiritual truths. Of course, the right type of missionary is needed for a venture of this kind, but he might be found in colleges such as Kelham and Mirfield. These missionaries, speaking to little groups in market places in town and country, might well be the beginning of better things.

Meanwhile, the country parson must persevere in keeping alive the things of the spirit, and the real centre for this will be the parish church. In most country parishes, there will be various organisations, but their value as a spiritual force will depend mainly on what goes on in the church. If the church is neglected, dull and lifeless, the spiritual life of the parish will be correspondingly dull and lifeless. The whole thing will depend on the life of prayer. It will be found, however, that many who are so contemptuous about prayer are those who have never really tried it. If they have tried prayer, it has probably meant no more than just asking for things they wanted. The way of prayer,

like many other things, has to be learnt in a hard school. Many people imagine that the country priest has an easy life and the idea that he only works one day in seven still persists.

This is far from the case as I can testify from my knowledge of country parsons in this district. Our work is so to labour for the things of the spirit that the wave of materialism now sweeping over the world may not engulf our villages and destroy those seeds of the Eternal verities without which life is surely futile and meaningless.

CHAPTER TEN

Further Phenomena

I am writing this further chapter on Borley because other phenomena have occurred which I think should be recorded.

So far as I know things have been quiet at the church except for a few minor incidents. Is it because on All Souls Day 1947 we prayed for an unquiet spirit at the Requiem Mass on the Sunday?

My only strange experience in Borley church in 1948 is as follows.

On Sunday June 6th I went up to church to take the 10 o'clock catechism. It happened that there was only one child present. I had left the west door wide open and was seated on a pew in full view of the porch. While I was teaching the porch was suddenly darkened by a shadow. I said to the girl : "Did someone come into the porch ?" And she replied, "No, but I saw a shadow." It was a cloudy morning with no sign of the sun breaking through the clouds or I might have accounted for it in that way. Certainly I have never seen a shadow darken the porch in this way before during all the years I have been at Borley. I told the Turners about it and Mrs. Turner said she had sometimes seen a shadow in the house which she could not account for.

The following incident takes us back to Harry Bull's time. I have not been able to mention it before because I have only just heard about it during this November, 1948.

Miss Mills who lives at Rodbridge used to work at the rectory for the Bulls. She told me that, one day, while they were busy about the house they suddenly heard the sound of the passing bell. Miss Freda Bull who had prepared a pudding for a sick parishioner immediately concluded that he had died and said to the cook : "Take that pudding out of the oven, he won't need it now." They then went across to the church with the rector but no bell ringer could be found. No one had died in the parish and no one could be found who had rung the bell.

It has been suggested to me that the phenomena at Borley are due either to the performance of the Black Mass or to witchcraft or possibly both. The Black Mass (it was contended) had taken place within living memory.

I find it difficult to believe that such a service could have been performed secretly at night so near the rectory. I believe too that the church has always been locked up at night.

There seems, however, to be some foundation for the suggestion of witchcraft. An old parishoner told me that when she came to Borley over 40 years ago there was said to be a witch—not a woman, but a man. I believe 'warlock' is the right term. This man, she said, could stop a wagon and horses with his eye. I asked if she meant he had the evil eye, and overlooked them, and she said 'Yes.' If there is any truth in this—and I am told witchcraft trials were notorious in Essex—it is significant that the cottage in which he lived seems to be definately haunted.

A visitor said she had seen the ghost of a little old lady on one occasion. However that may be, there is a parishoner of mine still living in Borley, who had a very unpleasant time in the house.

When in bed she was frequently disturbed by patterning footsteps. As far as I could gather, the noise seems to have resembled the padding dog which so disturbed the Coopers when they lived in the rectory cottage. She tried moving into another room, but the steps followed her there.

I wrote to a member of the staff at the Record Office at Chelmsford to see if he could enlighten me on the subject of Black Magic and witchcraft. The reader will recall that I obtained much information about Borley from this place.

I quote from the letter I received as follows :—

'The question of Black Magic has also been mentioned to me in connection with the Borley manifestations, but while I have no proof of this, it would not—to be quite honest—surprise me to learn that it had been practised. For such meagre information as one can gather, there are some astonishing instances of the influence of Black Magic surviving for a long period, and I feel that an atmosphere created as a result of evil practices is as strong as that created by good ones. An atmosphere does indeed pervade a building or area to such an extent that its presence is very real, especially to people who are psychic, if I may use the phrase. But I cannot explain Black Magic ritual or the extent of its force as I have had no experience of them, and it is a subject which I feel to be so unhealthy that I have not given any serious study to it.'

'Witchcraft is a somewhat different matter, but here again one must be cautious in assigning to supernatural powers, the results obtained by persons alleged to have practised witchcraft.'

'Any miraculous cure or any result obtained by unusual methods was attributed to witchcraft in many cases, and the working of evil or good (real or imaginary) by such methods were regarded as being the province of a selected few. The fact that a strong personality was working on a weaker, that

superstition, fear and mistrust were inherent in the minds of a large section of the population, are matters which were not taken into account, and the belief in an unknown power capable of doing good or evil as required, was a not uncommon state of mind.

'A psychologist could probably quote parallel cases to-day. It was the failure to analyse or even attempt to control, such a mental state, that encouraged the practice of what is called witchcraft. As you ask for my opinion, I must say that I am convinced that some people were highly susceptible to the power of others, and that such power was communicated by thought, look or action. The conscience too, of the affected party played an important part in the working of good or evil (perhaps the faith of the affected party would be a more appropriate expression). It is not so many years ago that two Essex men were indicted for "trying" a witch—the poor old lady nearly lost her life by being "swum" in the village pond.

'There are many problems connected with Borley, but the greatest of them is, in my view, the fact that it was not until the 1860's or 70's that the phenomena were first mentioned. If indeed there had been manifestations before then, I am certain they would have been recorded either in writing or by tradition.'

The writer is probably correct in the contention that we should find some record or tradition of an earlier haunt. However we can probably take the nun story a little further back.

An elderly lady in the next village told me she remembered very clearly the story of the nun. She was only about fifteen at the time, and the old man who recounted the tale said he was a boy of fourteen when he first heard the account of the Borley nun. This would take the story back about one hundred years.

I have now to record some remarkable phenomena which have taken place, not in Borley, but in a parish intimately connected with it—Langenhoe. I had meant for some time to get in touch with the rector, but I had put off writing to him. Hearing, however, that some strange things had recently happened there, I determined to delay the matter no longer. I wrote to the rector, the Rev. E. A. Merryweather, telling him something of the Borley story, and he replied as follows :

St. Peter's Road,
West Mersea,
Essex.

The rectory at Langenhoe was sold some years ago, so I live at the above address. The Waldegraves lived at the Manor House for some time. Whether the 'spiritual agent' was connected with the Waldegraves or the rectors, I do not

know. What I do know is that it is a woman. My information came to me in this way. When Mrs. Cutting was living at the Manor, she showed me over the house, and into the best bedroom, where she informed me, "she did not use that room as there was something queer about it."

I was surprised at this, and said "but what a pleasant view you have out of this window." Mrs. Cutting went out of the room asking me to go and look at the other rooms, and then, as I turned round, I felt distinctly a woman's body against mine. One embrace, and the dear lady was off.

The first time something funny happened, was one day in August 1937, when the west door was crashed to with a terrific bang. The air was still, or I would have thought it was the wind. Since then somebody on certain Sundays throws something against the vestry door during the Eucharist. The vestry door is often held tight and then suddenly released. The same once happened to my suit case. We have not had anything funny for the last three weeks. Perhaps the lady has gone to Borley or somewhere else for a time. We do not hear footsteps on the church path, and there is no organ playing. I am quite sure, from my experience here, it is a woman.

After some further correspondence it was arranged that we (that is, my wife and myself) should go over to West Mersea and visit Langenhoe church. It was a perfect day for November and we stopped at West Mersea to look at the shipping in the harbour. The sun was shining, the sea perfectly calm, and it was so mild that it might have been a spring day.

During lunch our host gave us a more detailed account of the Langenhoe phenomena. He was inclined to think that the embracing woman might be Arabella Waldegrave, that she come over from France and stayed at the house of seven steps (the old rectory) or the manor.

I asked Mr. Merryweather to give me details of this extraordinary incident. He said there was not very much he could add to what he had written to me. As he turned from the window facing the empty room, he distinctly felt the naked body of a woman embracing him.

He then told us of another strange incident. While Langenhoe rectory was standing empty it was his custom to look round the grounds occasionally to see that all was in order. He was assisted in this by the policeman. The latter arrived one day on his bicycle, and saw on the lawn what he took to be a French cavalryman. He called out, asking the man what he was doing there, but got no response. After walking from the Cyprus tree to the east end of the house, the man just disappeared. The policeman made a most careful search of the grounds, but could not find anyone.

Mr. Merryweather said the policeman had been in France, and got a distinct impression of something French about the figure.

We were anxious to see as much of Langenhoe church as possible during the short afternoon, so we set off after an early lunch, taking the rector with us, in the car.

Langenhoe—"the long hill" of the Saxons, about four miles from West Mersea, is a small village near the Essex marshes. We passed houses on both sides of the highway, which our host told us belonged to his parish. Langenhoe has its share of modern houses, but also several old timbered cottages so often found in Essex. Leaving the main road we travelled down the lane which leads to the church of St. Mary the Virgin.

The small church with its tower is a fine looking building and it is unfortunate that it was so badly damaged by the earthquake of 1884. Though repaired, the building never seems to have recovered from this shaking, and, as the rector told us, the church always seems to be 'on the move' and in need of almost constant repair.

Much of the church dates from the fifteenth century, including some of the windows. After looking at various interesting things in the church, including the fine font, probably damaged by the Puritans, we examined the vestry door on which loud knocks are sometimes heard during the Eucharist.

I asked the rector to let me test the door for any abnormal pressure, but I found the door opened quite easily. This of course proves nothing, for it is seldom indeed that anything paranormal happens when one makes a test of this kind.

We were interested in the list of rectors hung up in the church, for among them were several familiar names. Plane and Murrel were rectors of Borley as well as Langenhoe, but as I have already stated they lived at Borley. Robert Moreton gave up Langenhoe when he was appointed to Borley. Robert Moreton apparently lived at Langenhoe.

Robert Warren, the distinguished priest already mentioned, resigned Langenhoe in 1618 and continued to serve Borley. After the Restoration, Plane and Murrel held both Borley and Langenhoe, the church registers indicating that they lived at Borley. However Robert Moreton, who succeeded Humphrey Burrough as rector of Borley, being already rector of Langenhoe, continued to reside there.

The reader will naturally wonder if there is a connection between the hauntings of Borley and Langenhoe. It certainly seems that it may be so. As we have seen, several of the rectors held both livings. Even in days when non-residence was common, there must have been a certain amount of travelling between the two parishes.

Perhaps the most suggestive thing is that the Waldegraves of Borley held Langenhoe Hall. It is conceivable that Frances Waldegrave retired to Langenhoe as Mr. Merryweather has suggested to me. It will be recalled that after the death of her husband—Sir Edward—she was summoned to London and questioned as to certain plans she had made to send her daughter out of the country secretly. It might well be that Frances would consider it wiser to retire to

Langenhoe Hall. Here it would be much easier to get away by sea, if the necessity should arise, and her friends in France could more easily visit her.

Is it then Frances who haunts Langenhoe? Mr. Merryweather thinks it likely, if we rule out Arabella Waldegrave.

I have a few more strange incidents to mention before I close this chapter. A visitor to the church was surprised to notice the oil lamp just above her, swinging to and fro during Evensong. There was no draught, and in any case it was only the lamp that moved and not the long chain from which it is hung. The movement lasted about ten minutes. I was in the pulpit part of the time and did not notice anything.

A parishioner recently noticed a very strong smell of incense during the Service. The smell was sufficiently strong to make him look back towards the vestry to see if any preparations were being made for the use of incense during the Service. Strange odours are not unusual phenomena on the site of the old rectory, but this is the first instance of it in the church as far as I know.

Some visitors however noticed a strong smell of incense close to the church gate when they arrived for a service. They had mistaken the time and there was no service at all that afternoon.

A villager had much the same experience whilst out for a walk. As she was going down the road, she noticed a strong smell of incense. It seemed to come from the direction of the old rectory. On her return, she particularly noticed there was no trace of the smell.

These incidents may seem mere trifles to some readers, and yet to me they indicate that there is still something strange and inexplicable lingering in haunted Borley.

RECTORS OF BORLEY, ESSEX

				<i>Date of institution.</i>
Peter de Cacheport	...	..	..	1236
Robt. de Walinesford	...	..	..	1295
Peter de Guldeford	...	..	..	1298
Richard de Henley	...	..	..	1313
Hugh Aumfray	...	..	..	1317
Robert de Stokes	...	..	..	1335
Regnerus de Aston Somerill	...	..	..	1340
Tho. de Cottingham	...	..	..	1343
John Grimesby	...	..	..	Jan. 1348
Simon de Dullingham	...	..	..	Mar. 1348

In 1341, Aston had King's Licence to exchange with Will. de Newenham of Wolleston, Dioc. of Worcs. Did it take effect? He exchanged in January, 1343 for Dornay, Diocese of Lincoln with

RECTORS OF BORLEY, ESSEX (*continued*)

				<i>Date of institution.</i>
Walter Sweyn	...	...	...	Sept. 1348
Black Death swept England in 1348.	Did it reach Borley?			
Will. de Woketon	...	...	...	1369
Will. de Shelton	...	...	...	1370
Will. Wigor	...	...	...
Will. Hyndele	...	...	...	1397
Will. Heyward	...	...	...	1399
Joh. Aelyn	...	...	...	1400
Joh. Taylor	...	...	...	1429
Will. Ingland	...	...	...	1441
Tho. Fox	...	...	...	1444
Tho. Messenger	...	...	...	1454
Tho. Fenn	...	...	...	1460
Galf. Maliard	...	...	...	1473
Will. Norfolk	...	...	...	1482
Reg. Smith	...	...	...	1488
Sir Nicholas Talbot (in 1503)	...	...
Robt. Fyrmyn	...	...
Joh. Dawe or Dove d. 1552				
Rad. Metcalfe	...	...	...	1552
Tho. Randelson	...	...	...	1555
Will. Cooper	...	...	...	1561
Ste. Luskyn	...	...	...	1565
Will. Louther	...	...	...	1569
Robt. Warren, A.M., S.T.P.	...	...	...	1607
Will. Playne	...	...	...	1661
Tho. Murell (Muriell)	...	...	...	1680
Robt. Goodwin, M.A.	...	...	...	1709
Perry King, M.A.	...	...	...	1719
Humphrey Borrough, M.A.	...	...	...	1722
Robt. Moreton, M.A.	...	...	...	1758
Will. Stevenson	...	...	...	1771
Will. Herringham	...	...	...	1807
Joh. P. Herringham	...	...	...	1819
Hon. D. Bull, M.A.	1862
Hen. F. Bull, M.A.	1892
Guy. E. Smith	1928
L. A. Foyster, M.A.	1930
A. C. Henning	1936

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